

J. Folger

THE
LORD'S-DAY
Evening ENTERTAINMENT,

Containing Fifty-two

Practical Discourses

On the most Serious and Important

SUBJECTS in DIVINITY,

Intended for the

USE of FAMILIES.

In FOUR VOLUMES.

By JOHN MASON, A.M.

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THE

OF THE

Physical Sciences

On the most serious and important

DIVINITY



IN THE

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VOL. II.

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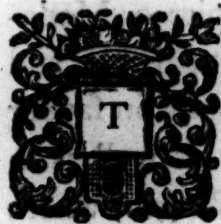


S E R M O N I.

The Duty of an inoffensive CONDUCT,

I COR. X. 32.

*Give none Offence, neither to the Jews,
nor to the Gentiles, nor to the
Church of God.*



THE Apostle, in the latter part of this chapter, is giving his Opinion upon a point of Controversy which was warmly debated in his day; viz. "whether or no it was lawful for Christians, on any Occasion, to eat of that Meat which had been offered in sacrifice to Idols."

This some denied; supposing that it gave countenance to the pagan Idolatry, was in-

SERM. consistent with a worthy partaking of the
 I. Lord's Supper, and might be a means of
 drawing back some weak converts to their
 heathenish Superstition.

Others affirmed it to be lawful on the following principles. — That the meat itself could not defile their Conscience, provided they had no superstitious view in eating it; that the christian state into which they were entered, gave them a liberty of eating any thing, provided they received it with Sobriety and Thanksgiving; and that it was not fit that this part of their christian liberty should be abridged by the weakness or unreasonable scrupulosity of another Man's Conscience.

The Apostle stands as Umpire or Moderator between these two different parties; and does not absolutely decide the point in favour of either of them: but here, as well as in the fourteenth Chapter to the *Romans*, where he handles this matter more at large, he steers a middle course; and tells both parties that in such a matter as this, which was not essential to Christianity, they might each of them pursue their own way, and act according to their own judgment; provided that
 herein

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II

herein they had a particular regard to these three things; 1. Not to act contrary to their Conscience, or the persuasion of their own mind concerning the lawfulness of the thing they allowed. 2. Not to disturb the peace of the Church, which they should endeavour by all means to maintain; and 3. To give no just offence to others: *For, says he, if thy Brother be grieved by thy meat, thou walkest not charitably (a).* So in the Text, *give none Offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of GOD*; that is, to no one person in the World: for the Jews, the Gentiles, and Christians (which last are here meant by the Church of God) comprehended at that time all mankind.

In treating of these Words, I propose,

I. To open to you the nature of the Duty here recommended.

II. To enforce it with some proper heads of Motive.

I. I am to open to you the nature of the Duty here recommended. Wherein I shall shew you,

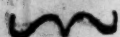
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I. What

(a) Rom. xiv. 15.

SERM.

I.



1. What we are to understand by the word *Offence*.

2. With what restrictions the Precept in the Text must reasonably be taken.

3. What is the proper latitude and extent of it in a few particulars, wherein men are most apt to forget it.

1. What are we to understand by the word *Offence*.

This word is taken in two senses. The Scripture acceptation of it is very different from that in which it is commonly used.

In the sacred Writings it generally signifies a *Stumbling-block*; or whatever is the occasion of another's Fall. Thus it is used *Rom. xiv. 20, 21. It is evil in that man who eateth with Offence*, (that is, though eating this kind of meats be in itself an indifferent thing, yet if a man, by using this Liberty of his, be the occasion of drawing another to act contrary to his Conscience, his eating in that case is no longer indifferent, but sinful;) *for it is good neither to eat Flesh, nor to drink Wine, nor any thing whereby thy Brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.* In this sense it is explained *ver. 13, of that chapter, Judge this rather, that no Man put a Stumbling-*
bling-

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SERM.
I.

bling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his Brother's way. To offend a Brother, in this sense, is to cause him to offend; and to give him Offence, is to be the occasion of his Sin; and to draw him on, by our Example, to act contrary to his own Conscience.

But the word *Offence*, in the common acceptation of it, is taken in a very different sense, to signify an occasion of *Anger, Grief, or Resentment*. Whoever finds these passions stirring in his mind, is said to be *offended*; and whatever be the Incentive or Cause of them, is called the *Offence*. — And this distinction ought carefully to be remembered; because an inattention to it hath created many needless scruples of Conscience, and been the ground of much confusion in our Ideas concerning the just nature and extent of the Duty here required.

But in this latter sense we sometimes find the word used in Scripture, as well as in the former. As *Psal. cxix. 165. Great peace have they that love thy Law, and nothing shall offend them*; that is, nothing shall greatly interrupt that Peace. *Mat. xvii. 27. Nevertheless, lest we should offend them, go thou to the Sea, and cast an Hook, and take up the Fish that*

SERM. *that first cometh up; that is, that we may not*
 I *give them any just cause of Anger or Resent-*
ment against us; or let us wave our Privilege
at present for Peace sake.

It is this latter sense in which I intend to open and improve the words of the Text; and consider them as a Precept, to *follow after things that make for peace, and to keep our Conscience void of Offence towards all men.* In which sense I proceed now,

2. To consider with what restrictions this Precept must reasonably be taken.

For there are certain limits within which it is circumscribed, and beyond which if it goes, it is no longer a Virtue. The Apostle's Exhortation is, — *If it be possible, and as much as in you lies, live peaceably with all men.* But that very command implies, that sometimes the thing is not possible. There are indeed a great many things which a wise man would sacrifice to peace; but there are some things which a good man cannot. The rights of conscience are sacred, and the obligations of Religion inviolable. And whilst a Christian stedfastly resolves at all times to keep them so, it is not possible but he must give Offence to some. The bright-
 est

an inoffensive Conduct.

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SERM.

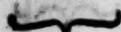
I

est pattern of inoffensive meekness, *Jesus Christ himself*, with all his gentleness of Temper and prudence of Conduct, could not *live peaceably with all Men*. His Fidelity to his Father's cause, and the Interests of Truth and Righteousness exposed him to a torrent of Envy, and brought upon him all the malignity and malice of the Jewish Priests and Rulers, who took great Offence at the testimony he bore against the Iniquity of their Conduct.

1. Then, when peace with men stands in competition with our duty to God, we should not be afraid of giving them Offence. This is an adjudged case, a plain determined point; that *we ought to please God rather than Man*, or chuse to offend Man rather than God, when we are so unhappy as to be in such a situation, wherein the offending one of them is unavoidable. These circumstances the Apostles were in when they were charged by the *Sanhedrim* never more to *preach or teach in the Name of Jesus*. To comply with this command would be a great Offence to God; not to comply, a great Offence to Man. But they made no difficulty of the Alternative; being determined at once to obey God rather

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I.



rather than Man; wherein they have laid down a rule for us to act by in all like cases (b).

Nay, in such a case, we should not only be constant to risk the Displeasure of men, but to suffer the utmost efforts of their malice, rather than deliberately offend the GOD that made us, as *Joseph* was, who dared to disobey the wicked command of his Mistress; and the three children that of *Nebuchadnezzar*. And to this Principle the Martyrs constantly adhered, and chose to endure the greatest sufferings rather than violate their Conscience, and to renounce their Lives before their Religion.

2. Not only the honour of GOD, but the rights of Conscience, must be maintained as sacred, in opposition to all that would invade them, however that opposition may offend them. By the rights of Conscience I mean that power which GOD and Nature have given to every man, to act and think in all matters that concern Religion and his Soul, not according to the authoritative decrees and decisions of men, but according to the dictates and determinations of his own Conscience,

(b) Acts v. 29.

an inoffensive Conduct.

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Science, Reason and Judgment. Conscience SERM.
is not to be controuled by any human Au- I.
thority. The very attempt to controul it is
insolent and impious. It is flying in the face
of the Almighty, and counteracting his own
work; who hath given to Conscience this in-
violable prerogative, to be uncontroulable by
any thing but his own Almighty Power.

As nothing is more glorious than to suffer
Persecution in the Cause of God and Con-
science, so nothing is more wicked than
to excite it. Nor is it less ridiculous than it
is impious. Methods of violence are a very
filly way of confuting an Error, as if cruel-
ty were the Parent of Truth; corporeal Pu-
nishment the cure of mental Infirmities; and
a man's mind could be enlightened by the
flames that consume his Body. Where-ever
we see then any marks of such a persecuting
spirit (which is ever the off-spring of Super-
stition and Bigotry, as *they* are of Pride and
Ignorance) we should readily oppose it; and
dare to be advocates for the sacred Rights of
Conscience, where-ever we see them arrogant-
ly trampled upon, however we may incur
the displeasure of men thereby. For herein
we are Advocates for God, for his own

*St Paul
adresses
rebuks
in sharp
-ly that
they may
be sound
in the
faith.
I conceive
the un-
soundness
of such*

*as to the faith, arose from the unsoundness
of their heart: corrupt principles views
led in astray. & therefore deservedly to
be sharply & severely reprimanded to give an unbi-
ased regard to the truth as it is in Jesus.*

*It is highly to be lamented for surviving from the
pure uncorrupt Symphets of the Christian Doctrin
- present, turning aside to vain jangling: &c.*

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The Duty of

SERM. Wisdom and Workmanship; and for that

I.

which is the very foundation of all sincere and acceptable Religion; which would be entirely at an end if the Consciences of Men were to be dictated to, domineered over, and trampled upon, by the Arrogance and Superstition of their fellow-creatures, as liable to mistake and error as other men.

3. Nor are the perverse and unreasonable humours of men to be *always* submitted to for fear of giving Offence. Where Religion and Conscience are out of the case, there ought indeed to be great Condescension and Compliance for the sake of Peace: nor would it be either wise or charitable to provoke a man of a perverse spirit by a stiff opposition in little things, even where fact and truth may be against him; which might probably kindle those flames of Contention which we should afterward find extremely difficult to extinguish. For Solomon's Observation is very just, *that the beginning of Strife is as when one letteth out Water*; and the Advice he gives us thereupon is exceeding wise; *therefore leave off Contention before it be meddled with* (c). But still I say, I see no obligation

(c) Prov. xvii. 14.

gation a man is under to suffer his reason to be always controuled, and his understanding to be insulted by a proud and petulant Humour. The Truth (especially if it be very plain and important) ought to be sometimes boldly asserted, strongly proved, and closely urged; and the Vanity and Ignorance of the conceited Humourist mortified and exposed. This we sometimes owe to the cause of Truth and common Justice.

SERM.

I.



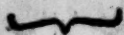
Nor ought an uncharitable and superstitious spirit to be always indulged, by our abstaining from things in their own nature innocent and indifferent, purely because some persons of that cast are pleased to censure and take Offence at them: I mean provided those things give no *real* Offence, by becoming the occasion of Sin to others. There is no reason, and no end, in being very solicitous to please those who are displeased without reason. If persons will take Offence where none is really given, it is their own fault. It is they that violate the Precept in the Text. For to *take* Offence unreasonably is to *give* it.

4. It is lawful sometimes to give Offence to others for the sake of their good. That is, when

The Duty of

SERM.

I.



when that good we are able to do them cannot be done without it. This especially takes place in case of Reproof; where a person's Interest and Wisdom render him capable of giving it, and his Station and Character make it his Duty so to do.

This, it must be owned; is a very nice and delicate Affair: for Reproof may be given by some persons in such a manner as to administer just cause of Offence; whereby, whatever views they had therein, they really do more harm than good. For instance, when a person takes upon him this Office, for which he hath neither Interest, nor Authority, nor Wisdom to qualify him: or when the Reproof is so severe, and the ground of it so trifling, that it plainly appears to proceed from Pique or Pride in the person that gives it, rather than from any Fault in him that receives it. But if a Person be authorised to give Reproof, is capable of it, and is sensible of the necessity of it, for the Advantage of him to whom it is owing, such a one ought not to be deterred from giving it on proper occasions, through fear of giving Offence. A Parent would tie up his hands from doing many things

Let Zeal
is seeking
to reform
it is a mis-
take in our
Brothers
be graced
in Rumor
the meek-
ness of the
science.

Let Love
compassion
a tender
reproof
in our
Countenances

Let us be

our Seasonable reproof to good to be raised for
it is commendations as St Paul in his Epistles
our Lord out of Heaven blaming some
Errors in the Churches of Asia. our

an inoffensive Conduct.

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I.

for the real Good and Benefit of his Children, were he always to act upon this Principle, never to do any thing which may grieve or displease them. The same maxim (which is not founded on Meekness but excessive Tenderness or Timidity) would deprive some of our best Friends of an opportunity of doing us the most signal service; and indeed is a quality which one would not wish for in a Friend; and is seldom found in a real one.

5. Nor should we be afraid of giving a private Offence when it is necessary to the public good. Otherwise Magistrates would not be faithful to their Trust; nor could penal Laws be executed, nor Criminals detected; who doubtless are very much offended and displeased with those who are the instruments of bringing them to Justice.

6. We should not be too scrupulous of giving Offence in justifying an injured Character, or in vindicating the Honour and Reputation of an absent person, when aspersed or abused by the petulance of an unbridled or malicious Tongue. For, this is nothing but common Justice due to injured Innocence; and what Humanity dic-

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tates.

Lord Runces, while he blames much the
conduct of his disciples sleeping in the
Garden of Gethsemane. He is willing the
weak-flesh is weak.

SERM.

I.

tates. And surely they who are unreasonably severe on the Characters of others, can with no face of reason resent a just and reasonable animadversion upon their own; or be offended with us for telling them a plain Truth to their face, who are guilty of a much greater Indecorum, in reporting perhaps a notorious falshood of others behind their back.

Lastly, When the Honour, Interest and Credit of Religion are manifestly concerned, they ought not to be meanly prostituted for the sake of peace; but defended with a force of Reason and Remonstrance becoming the Importance of the Subject, whatever diminution it may be to our own Character in the esteem of the persons we oppose. Let them call us Bigots, if they please; we are not to betray the cause of common Christianity in compliment to their Infidelity.

These then are some of those restrictions and limitations with which the Precept in the Text must be taken and guarded.

3. I am now to consider the proper Latitude and Extent of it, in a few particulars wherein men are most apt to forget it.

So positive & dogmatical, refuse to bear information that they or others And in the notions they fondly embrace, obstinately adhere to, or are in the too great sensibility on, are such as apt to be uncharitable to such as differ from

Bigotry
is a slight
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to a plea
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notions
relating
to religion
beyond
their real
nature.

Scale of
excellency

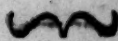
an inoffensive Conduct.

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And the particulars I mean are with respect to men's Opinions, Practices, Conversation, Commerce, Tempers, Talents, and Relations in Life.

SERM.

I.



1. We should take care we do not give a needless Offence to others in matter of *Opinion*. Especially in subjects of mere speculation; which are commonly not of importance enough for a wise man to expend his Zeal upon, much less to lose his Temper for. And yet so it often happens, that things of the smallest moment are zealously defended as essentially necessary, whilst matters of the highest concern are neglected as indifferent.

To prevent giving Offence in matters of Opinion, let us often think with ourselves thus. — “ It is reasonable to suppose, that
“ how much soever others differ from me,
“ they have the same Zeal and Fondness for
“ their Sentiments as I have for my own;
“ and are no less assured that the Truth lies
“ on their side, than I am that it lies on
“ mine; to what end then should we make
“ our different Opinions (of which we are
“ both equally tenacious) the subject of De-
“ bate; when there are so many other things

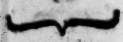
B 2

“ of

perhaps transfer the name of Bigotry to them

SERM.

I.



“ of more Importance, on which the Con-
 “ versation might turn to mutual Advantage?
 “ To say, it is their Ignorance and Obsti-
 “ nacy that they do not think as I do,
 “ is great Weakness; because for the same
 “ reason they may say, it is *my* Ignorance
 “ and Obstinacy that I do not think as they
 “ do. Whereas the true reason why we do
 “ not see things in the same light is, because
 “ we see with different Eyes, and through a
 “ different Medium. To brand another
 “ with Heresy and Schism, because he does
 “ not come up to my Standard in any par-
 “ ticular Modes of Faith or Worship, is the
 “ Characteristic of a little, narrow, proud
 “ Spirit. It favours too much of youthful
 “ Heat and Confidence, and goes off in pro-
 “ portion as we advance in Wisdom, Grace,
 “ and Self-acquaintance. It is indeed genu-
 “ ine Bigotry,; the true Offspring of Igno-
 “ rance and Pride united; which I clearly
 “ see hath been the source of the greatest
 “ Offence and Mischief to the Church of
 “ Christ in all Ages. — What follows then,
 “ but that I be content that others differ
 “ from me as much as they please? All I
 “ desire is, that I may be permitted to differ

“ as

an inoffensive Conduct.

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“as much from them in Peace and Cha-
“rity.”

SERM.

I.

2. In like manner we should take care how we give just Offence to weak Christians in matters of *Practice*. This now is a case *in point*; or that to which the words in the text directly and immediately refer. In all indifferent points of Practice, (such as *eating, or not eating meats offered to Idols*, was in the Apostle's time, in such points, I say) we should always chuse the most charitable side as the safest. If any particular practice of our's be a means of drawing others into sin, or encouraging them to act contrary to their own Conscience, it is no longer an indifferent thing whether we continue in it or no. Though it be in itself indifferent, yet if it give real Offence to weak and scrupulous Consciences, *that* is a good reason why it ought to be discontinued. This is a rule the Apostle hath often laid down in this case, and by which he was determined to form his own conduct. *If, says he, the eating meat make my Brother to offend, I will eat no more meat whilst the world stands, lest I make my Brother to offend (d).*

meat is offered to Idols

B 3

3. We

(d) 1 Cor. viii. 13.

SERM.

I.

3. We should take care not to give Offence in our *Discourse* or *Conversation* with others. To which end we should avoid all needless and positive Contradiction; which is commonly disgusting, especially when it appears to proceed from pride and affectation; and sometimes is the beginning of much uncharitable Contention. As we often find that they who are most ready to contradict are most impatient of Contradiction, so in general we may observe, that they who are most apt to give Offence, are least able to bear it. Not that we are bound to indulge the Caprice of every conceited Humourist; but it will be often found the wisest way to let such have their Humour, rather than by a stiff Opposition to inflame them. A prudent, peaceable and inoffensive Christian will do what he can to render himself agreeable in all companies, and procure the esteem of men by all obliging Compliances consistent with those few Restrictions I have before mentioned.

4. We should take care to give no just Offence in our way of *Commerce* or *Dealings* with men. Either by Exaction and Oppression; or by a very easy and uncharitable Love; we are to receive our counsels & loving reproofs. There is a certain charm in such that

we ought
to study
the most
innocent
arts to
ingratiate
ourselves
with all
aberrant
humour
making it very easy
to receive our counsels & loving reproofs
There is a certain charm in such that

The greatest charm in respect of such as Rail
 injured is to be returned for Rail doing good
 for evil but himself to be as the others who are
 void of injury. *an inoffensive Conduct.* is to dwell in
 the most secure & pleasant way in the world.

tion; or by rigorous and exorbitant Claims, SERM.
 beyond the Rules of Equity and Mercy, I.
 where there is but small ability to answer
 them. This the Prophet calls *grinding the*
Face of the Poor (e): — Or by methods of
 Fraud, in order to secure a Profit to ourselves
 by the Loss and Damage of another; or by
 taking advantage of his Ignorance, to over-
 reach and deceive him. For there is but
 little difference in the eye of GOD and court
 of Conscience, whether we injuriously de-
 prive a man of his property by *Fraud* or by
Force. The Injustice in the former case is
 equal to that in the latter, though the Vil-
 lany appear not so flagrant in the Eye of the
 World.

These things cannot fail to give great Of-
 fence, and that very justly; and especially
 when practised by those who profess to be
 governed, all the while, by the strictest prin-
 ciples of Christianity. The only general
 rule applicable to all particular cases of this
 nature, in order to avoid giving just Offence
 to any, is *that* which our Saviour hath laid
 down for us, and by which he requires every
 Christian to direct his Conduct, viz. "to

B 4

"do

SERM. "do to others that which, upon a change of
 I. "circumstances, we should judge reasonable
 "others should do to us. That is, to put
 "ourselves into another's place, and to do
 "nothing to him but what in that case we
 "should be willing to receive from him."

5. We should take care not to give Offence to others by our *Temper*s. In some tempers there are many things very disgusting and offensive, which tend very much to disturb the peace of Society, and dissolve the Bonds of christian Love and Friendship. I shall but just mention two or three.

1. A vain and ostentatious temper: when a man appears to centre all his views in himself, and to be so full of secret pride and self-applause, that it is continually running over his Lips. This Temper prompts a man to make himself the frequent subject of his own Discourse, to hint at his own excellencies, and to possess others with a high Idea of whatever he values himself most upon. It is easy to observe how hard such persons will labour and beg, in an oblique way, for a little Incense to their own Vanity; which if they cannot obtain from others, they seldom fail of setting them an example
 by

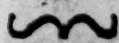
an inoffensive Conduct.

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by sprinkling it themselves. This Temper, if it prevails, is nauseous and offensive enough. But not near so bad as,

SERM.

I.



2. A rigid, censorious, and detracting Spirit, which often proceeds from the same original as the other, *viz.* secret Pride and excessive Self-love. Such men seek to raise their own Reputation for Wisdom, Wit, or Piety on the ruins of another man's: and sensible that *their* Character will make but a poor figure in the midst of others that outshine it, eclipse *them* to make their own conspicuous; hoping to appear more illustrious in proportion as they make others appear less so.

*alass there
is neither
wisdom
wit nor piety
in such a
conduct
but the
very reverse*

3. A passionate and revengeful Temper is a very offensive one. And not only so, but a most mischievous and hurtful one; and the farthest from the right Christian Temper of any whatsoever. This gives very just and universal Offence. And so does,

4. An arbitrary, over-bearing, and imperious Temper; which tyrannizes over ingenuous Modesty, and thinks to carry all before it by mere dint of Noise and Confidence. And,

Lastly,

SERM.

I.



Lastly, A mercenary and selfish Temper; which shews a little, narrow, contracted Heart, wrapped up in itself, and (Urchin-like) shut fast to all the World beside; whereas the Heart of a good man is open and generous, dilated with universal Benevolence, and longs to diffuse Joy and Gladness all around it.

Such dispositions as these are universally odious and offensive, and lead to actions that are much more so; and therefore ought carefully to be guarded against and avoided by every one that would *keep his Conscience void of Offence towards all men*.

6. We should take care to give no Offence to others, by the abuse of those *Talents* which we enjoy more than they. If we have more Health, Understanding, and Learning, better Parts, and a better Estate than others, and grow vain and arrogant, self-sufficient and capricious on account of these, and undervalue and despise others merely for the want of them; this gives just and great Offence, and shews, that we are very unworthy of the Talents we thus abuse.

Lastly, We should take care how we give Offence in any of those several *Relations* in Life wherein Providence hath placed us, whe-

an inoffensive Conduct.

23

whether they be superior or inferior ones; SERM.
I.
but by a conscientious regard to the Duties and Obligations of our respective Characters, seek at once to conciliate the Favour of Men, and secure the Blessing of God, which he hath pronounced on those that *study the things which make for Peace.*

And having thus opened to you the nature of the Duty commanded in the text, and shewed you with what Restrictions it must be taken, and in what Latitude it is to be practised, I shall conclude now,

Lastly, With a short Exhortation to it.

Unhappy it is, and a flagrant proof of the degeneracy of the present Age, that the greatest Glory of a Christian's character should ever be mentioned by Christians themselves in a way of contempt. *An honest, quiet, inoffensive man*, is an expression often used, at once to denote and excuse some supposed intellectual Defect. Which, I think, infers too great a Compliment to Pride and Villainy; as if there could be no good sense without them. However, notwithstanding the abuse of Language, and the force of false Names, let us but adhere to the sentiments

of

SERM. of Scripture, Reason and common Sense;
 I. and we shall soon be convinced, that the craftiest Villain is the greatest Fool, and the meek and harmless Christian the wisest Man. It is true, Inoffensiveness and Prudence do not always go together; no more do Wit and Wickedness: but still a Man of the lowest Talents, with a pure and honest Heart, will always be esteemed (degenerate as the World is) a more valuable Person than one whose Abilities are much greater, but whose Honesty is much less.

I shall recommend this duty of an inoffensive Conduct from two considerations, and so conclude.

1. The first is from the Example of our great Lord and Master, *Jesus Christ*. Which is not only our greatest Motive to it (for as his Disciples we profess to imitate him) but at the same time will be our best Direction in the Practice of it. In his Life and Temper we see it shine in all its perfection; and under all those due Restrictions beforementioned. He was not ashamed to maintain the Cause of God and Truth at the expence of his own Peace and Fame; nor afraid to oppose and reprove the proud Priests and bi-

He that would give no just offence is careful to be acquainted wth God & at peace wth his own conscience & his brethren. He will make great allowances in Humility & forbearance. He will labour to be acquainted wth the world & its different sentiments & will wisely conduct himself accordingly so as not to

gotten a good will, he endeavours to know himself & will make great allowances in Humility & forbearance. He will labour to be acquainted wth the world & its different sentiments & will wisely conduct himself accordingly so as not to

gotted *Pharisees*, though he knew he should give them Offence and incur their Hatred by so doing. Here he shewed the Courage of a Lion; in other cases all the Meekness of a Lamb: and hath taught us, by his great Example, to temper the wisdom of the Serpent with the innocence of the Dove, without the Venom of the one, or the Silliness of the other..

And what! have we no Ambition to be like our divine Master, in his wise Temper and Conduct? Shall we be for ever imitating the Follies and Foibles of weak, deluded men, which will lead us wrong, and never regard that perfect pattern which we know will lead us right? Is this wise or reasonable? —and when he so often calls us to imitate him——calls us with the voice of a Friend; and the bowels of a Saviour, to give him this testimony of the Love we so often profess to bear him!

When we see others then acting contrary to the Life and Temper of Jesus, and we find ourselves inclined to imitate them, let us conceive him saying to us, as he once did to *Peter* ——*What is that to thee? follow thou Me.*

2. He who makes no conscience of offending Men, will make no conscience of offend-

*moreover he cultivate every improving social
virtue & study to do ut good he can, blameless
harmless without reserve & cultivating every
amiable grace of conversation & have always
some pious instructive entertaining story
to furnish out conversation delightful to all*

SERM.

I.

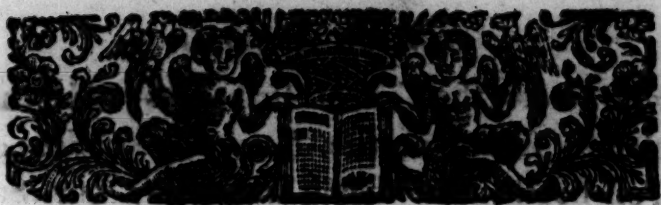


ing GOD. Nay, herein he actually does offend him. A just occasion of Offence given to *them*, is a real Offence offered to *him*: because it is a wilful violation of his Laws, which in the most express manner have forbidden it. *To keep a Conscience void of Offence towards GOD, we must keep one void of Offence towards man.* The only way to grow in favour with both.

To conclude——this character of a Christian is so frequently recommended in the Gospel of Christ, so signally exemplified in the Life of Christ, contributes so much to our present Peace and future Hopes, and is in itself so excellent and beneficial, and withal so easily attained by the help of a little common care and circumspection, that nothing but an Ignorance of, or Inattention to, these things, can be the reason that so little stress is laid upon it in proportion to its great Importance. As we desire then to be consistent Christians, and have a further evidence of our Sincerity, let us resolve, by the grace of GOD, to make it one constant Rule of our future Practice.

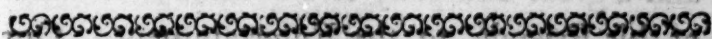
*Correct & refine our own tempers. & carry them
in our lives the Law & bind up. & give grateful
cheartfull open thanks ready to all good
in every place to every person. & at all
times. & with mild St Paul in reproof shall
praise you in this I praise you not.*

SER-



S E R M O N II.

SIN the SICKNESS of the SOUL.



LUKE V. 31.

*And Jesus answering said unto them,
they that are whole need not a Phy-
sician : but they that are sick.*

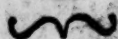


THESE Words were spoken by our Saviour in vindication of one part of his conduct, which the envious Scribes and Pharisees had unreasonably impeached. The Case was this.

Levi the Publican, or Roman Tax-gatherer, who was also called *Matthew*, Matth. ix. 9. (and was afterwards an Evangelist and Disciple of Christ, being the same with him who

SERM. who wrote the Gospel that goes under his

II.



Name) sitting at the *Receipt of Custom* or Toll-booth, and being called by our Saviour to be a constant Attendant on his Person, immediately *left all, rose up, and followed him*, ver. 27, 28. Upon this occasion *Levi made a great Feast at his own House*, ver. 29. and invited *Jesus* and his Disciples, and a great Company of Publicans, and other of his Friends, to the Entertainment. Our Saviour made no scruple to mix himself with such Company, but accepted the Invitation, and went. And this was the action at which the austere and over-righteous Pharisees took Offence: Not only that he should come to the Entertainment, but into such a mixed Company, where there were so many Persons of ill Repute. This therefore they readily threw in the Teeth of his Disciples, as a thing scandalous in their Master, that he should so familiarly associate with Persons, whom *they* (the Pharisees) industriously shunned, as the chief of Sinners: *Ver. 30. But the Scribes and Pharisees murmured against his Disciples, saying, why do ye eat and drink with Publicans and Sinners?* In *Matth. ix. 11.* which is the place parallel to this, the Charge

Charge is levelled directly against Christ himself; *Why eateth your Master with Publicans and Sinners?* SERM. II.

This Charge (though it was the effect of Malice, yet having something plausible and popular in it) he thought himself concerned to answer; and therefore replies in the text and verse following, *They that are whole need not a Physician, but they that are sick; I came not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance.* The plain Sense and Meaning of which words seems to be this. — “ You
 “ mistake the Case, if you imagine that I
 “ chuse Persons of such exceptionable Cha-
 “ racters for my particular and intimate
 “ Friends. My View in conversing so freely
 “ with them is, that I may have a fairer Op-
 “ portunity of doing them good. I attend
 “ them not as their Companion, but as their
 “ Physician. And where should the Phy-
 “ sician be but among his Patients? It is
 “ therefore out of Compassion that I visit
 “ and converse with *them*, rather than with
 “ those self-sufficient and self-righteous Per-
 “ sons, who from a fixed and fond Conceit of
 “ their own Health and Soundness, imagine
 “ that they stand in no need of such a Phy-
 VOL. II. C sician,

SERM. "fician, for I came not to call the Righteous,
II. "but Sinners to Repentance."

The Words thus introduced and opened, afford us these two plain Observations, which I fhall particularly treat and improve.

I. That Sin is the Sicknefs of the Soul.

II. That Chrift is the Phyfician of it.

I. Sin is the Sicknefs of the Soul. It is a fpiritual Malady which infects, diforders, weakens, and (if not removed) kills the Soul as natural Diftempers do the Body.

In treating this Obfervation, I fhall,

1. Shew you what Sin is.
2. That it is the Sicknefs, Difcfe, or Diftemper of the Soul.
3. Make Application of the Subject.

1. I am to fhew you what Sin is.

I fhall not be fo particular and circumftantial in this difquifition as the Matter will very well bear, (that I may not digrefs too far from the main Subject) but fhall difpatch it in as plain and concife a Manner as I am able.

If

If we would not then be mistaken in our Notions of Sin, let us attend to the Definition which the Apostle *John* gives of it, 1 *John* iii. 4. *Sin is a Transgression of the Law.* In general then, that which in any supposable Case or Circumstance is a plain and wilful Transgression of the Law of God is undoubtedly Sin, *for by the Law is the Knowledge of Sin, for I had not known Sin* (saith the Apostle) *but by the Law*, Rom. vii. 7. But this wants a more particular Explanation.

The Law of God then is twofold : either *natural* or *revealed*; the Law of *Reason* and the Law of *Revelation* : the former is immutable, and written in the Heart of Man; the latter, though more particular and explicit, is in some Cases alterable; and hath been delivered to the World by holy Men and Prophets, whom God at *sundry times, and in diverse manners*, inspired for that purpose. But neither of them does or can contradict the other. Because upon that supposition God, whose Laws they both are, would contradict himself. Now that which is a known and wilful Transgression of either of

SERM. these Laws, i. e. of the Law of Nature or
 II. Revelation, is Sin.

But now as the Law of GOD is two-fold, so is the Transgression of it. And a Law may be transgressed either by doing what it forbids, or by neglecting what it requires. Therefore if a Man does that which is forbidden either by Reason or Scripture, or neglects to do that which is required by either of them wilfully and allowedly in any supposable Circumstances, that Man sins. Because he is chargeable with a plain and palpable Violation or Transgression of the Law of GOD.

This then is the only Rule we have to go by in this Matter : And it seems so plain, that one would think there should be no danger of any one's mistaking it, either one way or the other : that is, that any one that does but impartially attend to this plain definition of Sin, should ever take those things to be Sin which are not, on the one Hand ; or think those things to be no Sins which really are so, on the other. For it is only considering what one Law of Reason or Revelation does such an Action contradict or transgress, and the matter is decided. If upon a competent Acquaintance with those
 Laws

Laws we find it contradicts none of them, the Action is no Sin, however some weak and uncharitable People may censure it; or if we find it certainly does contradict some one of them, it certainly is a Sin, however some ignorant and profane Men may pretend to justify it. And this I think is all that is necessary to be said under this Head. However it may not be amiss to subjoin two or three brief Remarks by way of Corollary or Inference. Hence then I infer,

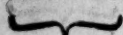
1. That the Bounds between good and evil are not vague and uncertain, but fixed and determinate.

Though the lowest degree of what is unlawful may not perhaps by some Persons, and in certain Circumstances, be easily distinguished from the utmost of what is lawful, yet there are always certain fixed Limits or Boundaries which part the extremes of both : which will soon be discerned by every one that will but give himself Liberty and Leisure seriously to attend to the Rule before mentioned : whereby no man of an honest and unbiassed Mind can be at a loss to judge of, and distinguish between Good and Evil.

It is true, that may be Sin in one person that is not so in another. Because that Ac-

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II.



tion which is fit and right and reasonable in one Person may not be so in another. And the same Action may be lawful at one Time and not at another: because the Circumstances of Time and Place, &c. may render it unfit and unreasonable. But still the Rule holds universally; (*viz.*) "that whatsoever Action, all Circumstances considered, at any particular time appears to be contrary to any part of the Law of Nature or Revelation, that Action is undoubtedly sinful. And that Action in which there appears no such Contradiction or Contrariety to any part of those divine Laws is not sinful." And hence it will further follow,

2. That there is a great deal more Sin in the World than some People are willing to allow.

Men in general are apt to entertain too slight and superficial notions of Sin: both of it's Nature and Consequences; or what it is, and what it deserves: either not allowing many things to be Sin which, in the Sight of God, certainly are; or not imagining the Consequences of it to be so very fatal as they will hereafter be found to be. And all for want of judging of both by some fixed, right and certain rule: or owing to their forming
a Judge

a Judgment by some wrong rule ; either by the wrong Notions of others, or some false Principles of their own. And hence it is that some Persons will justify those things as innocent or indifferent, which to others who have a better Understanding in religious things, appear *exceeding sinful*.

3. From this plain and short Definition of Sin we see the Folly and Absurdity of supposing that any do, or can, in this World, live entirely free from it. In direct contradiction to Scripture, which expressly declares that this is what no Man ever did, or can do (*a*). Whatever Action in any Circumstance or Person is contrary to any part of the Law of Nature, or the Word of God, *that* is Sin. And surely if we consider but the great Extent of these Laws, (which the Psalmist says, are *exceeding broad*) together with the Weakness of our Frame, the Corruption of our Natures, the Deceitfulness of the Heart, and the Temptations of the World and Devil, it could never enter into our Thoughts, that it was possible for any mere Man, in the present state, and under his present disadvantages, to come up fully

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(a) See 1 John i. 8, 10. James iii. 2. 1 Kings viii. 46. Psal. cxliiii. 2. 2 Chron. vi. 36.

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II.

fully to all that the divine Laws require of him; so as never to transgress any one of them, either in point of Omission or Commission. This is great Enthusiasm. And in short to assert it, is itself a Sin. Because it is to assert a Falshood; and that which evidently appears to be so both from Scripture and Reason.

And having thus shewed you what is Sin, I am now,

2. To consider it as the Sickness, Disease or Distemper of the Soul.

The whole, saith our Saviour, have no need of a Physician, but they that are sick. That is, (as he explains himself in the following Words) the self-righteous have no need (in their Opinion) of a Saviour, but the self-convicted Sinner, ver. 32. I came not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance. Hence then it follows, that Sin is the Sickness of the Soul.

To illustrate which Proposition I need only draw a Parallel between *this* and the Sickness of the Body. Which will set the matter in an easy and familiar Light; and shew you the great Propriety of this Representation of Sin, as the Sickness or Distemper of the Soul.

And

And here I shall only mention a few obvious instances of Agreement, and take care not to torture or overstrain the Metaphor by descending to low and imaginary points of resemblance: a charge which is often brought, but too justly, against this method of Discourse; which, however, when conducted with judgment, is very proper and profitable, and attended with these Advantages, that it is equally suited to all Capacities, conveys to the mind the most useful Instructions in the easiest manner, and helps the Memory to retain them.

Now the Similitude between the Sickness of the Soul, and that of the Body, will appear very obvious, whether we consider the *Cause*, the *Progress* or the *Effects* of both.

I. If we consider the *Cause* of them.

Sickness is nothing but an ill Habit of the Body, either received from others or contracted by some irregular Acts of our own. So Sin is an ill habit of the Mind, either received from others, or contracted by frequent evil Actions.

I. Some bodily Disorders are received by Infection from others. So the original Disorder of our Minds we receive from the Contagion

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tagion of our first Father's Sin ; which hath spread its fatal Taint through the whole human Nature. So that we are *conceived in Sin*, Psal. li. 5. *And who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean ?* Job xiv. 4. As some derive an infirm and sickly Constitution from their Parents ; so we all of us derive many spiritual Disorders, and a weak and depraved Nature from our first Parents. But,

2. Beside such hereditary Distempers there are many others which Persons contract themselves, by intemperate Gratifications or irregular Practices. So, beside original Sin, there are many actual Transgressions with which the human Soul is distempered, which it hath only to charge upon itself ; and these are exceeding numerous and various, and what we have most reason to fear and lament. And the Case of that Man must be very dangerous, whose infirm Constitution, received from his Parents, is continually more and more weakened by constant Excess and Intemperance.

And as some Constitutions are more subject to some Distempers than others, so some Tempers are more subject to certain Sins than others. And a Man's peculiar governing Sin is oftentimes as visible as the predominant

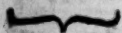
nant Fault of his bodily Constitution. As some Constitutions are more subject to a *Fever*, a *Tympany*, a *Palsy*, or *Lethargy*, than others; so some Men's Tempers are more inclined to *Passion*, *Pride*, *Diffidence*, or *Luke-warmness* than others. Which Vices of the Mind bear a Resemblance to the forementioned Distempers of the Body.—But the mention of these things may suffice.

2. We may observe a good Analogy or Agreement between the Distempers of the Mind and those of the Body, if we attend to the *Manner in which they invade us, or the Progress which each of them make.* For Instance,

1. Bodily Distempers sometimes *steal and grow upon us insensibly*; so do some Sins: Their first Assault is so imperceptible, and their first Progress so slow, that we are scarce sensible of them till they have gained a considerable head; and are at a loss to think when and how they began at first to invade us; and surprized to find ourselves so easily overcome by that Sin which perhaps we little thought ourselves in Danger of. As we carry the Seeds of Distempers in our Bodies, so we carry the Seeds of Sin in our Souls: which though we may not be presently aware of, yet when

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when the Sun-shine and Showers of Prosperity and Peace impregnate and cherish them, they soon shoot forth and discover themselves in the Life or Temper; and which (if they are suffered to take root and grow,) will require no small Pains to eradicate.

2. As bodily Distempers *gain Strength by Neglect and Indulgence*, or by our continuing in the same Course that brought them upon us; so do the Distempers of the Mind. The longer Sin is countenanced or let alone, the deeper Root it takes in the Heart; the more natural it becomes: So that to oppose it is like *repelling Nature*. It is a Maxim among Physicians, *Obsta Principiis*: Take care to stop the Beginnings of a Distemper. Nip it in the Bud. A rule that is of equal Use and Importance in the Distempers of the Mind. For it is not to be imagined how fast Sin grows upon us by Neglect, much more by Indulgence.

All Vice stands on a Precipice (b). And going on in a Course of it, is going down-hill. It will run fast enough of itself if we but neglect to stop it; much faster if we push it on by studied Indulgences. And, in pursuance of the

(b) Omne in Præcipiti Vitium stetit. *Juv.*

the same Metaphor, the further it runs the more Strength and Speed it acquires. Again,

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3. The Distempers of the Body are then most dangerous when the Patient is least sensible of them; so are the Distempers of the Soul.

It is a sign the Distemper is very high and raging when it hath seized the Head, and produced a *Delirium*. The Patient then, perhaps, is in most Ease, and thinks himself well; appears jocund and pleased; and talks apace of his worldly affairs, without expressing the least Concern about his present Danger, which his Friends cannot persuade him he is in. He thinks himself to be as well as they, but they know that now, in reality, he is worse than ever, and in the greatest Danger of Death.

In just such a melancholy Case may we observe some to be, who are under the Power of their spiritual Distempers. When Sin hath got the whole possession of the Soul, it often affects the Head, disturbs the Reason, and disorders the Powers of the Understanding. So that Sinners think themselves well, when they never were worse. Think themselves and their Souls safe enough, when they never were in more Danger. There is

no

SERM. no persuading them that their state is so
 II. bad as it is; that they are in great Danger of eternal Death. They will argue to the contrary. But their Reasoning is only Raving. They feel nothing, therefore they fear nothing; and imagine that they are as well, and that they shall be as safe, as they who seem to be under so much apprehension and concern for them. When Sin thus proceeds from the Heart to the Head, seizes the Understanding, and makes a Man turn even his own Reason against himself, and the Salvation of his Soul, his case then becomes very deplorable, and almost desperate.

When this is the case in bodily Distempers, the Patient is seldom brought to his senses but by the severest and most smarting external Applications; and a Sinner so hardened in Sin as to become insensible of it, and of any Danger from it, is seldom brought to a right sense of his state, but by some very sore continued Affliction or severe providential Visitation.

These few Instances may serve to shew the Similitude or Resemblance between the Distempers of the Body and those of the Soul,

Soul, with regard to their *Beginning* and *Progress*. SREM.
II.

3. The Resemblance is in several instances no less plain and natural with regard to their *Effects* and *Consequences*.

I will mention but a few of the most obvious, that I may not seem to overstrain the Metaphor.

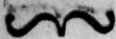
1. Sickness *weakens* or *infeebles* the Body, and renders it unfit to discharge it's proper Functions: the same Effect hath Sin upon the Soul.

It obscures the Understanding, sensualizes the Affections, perverts the Will, clouds the Memory, and debilitates all the rational and reflecting Powers. Pressed with a Load of Guilt, it is unable to exert itself with it's native Force and Vigour in all it's most noble Operations.

The three great Exercises and Operations of the Soul, are *Reflection*, *Consideration* and *Foresight*. By the *first*, we look back upon what is past; by the *second*, we form a Judgment of what is present; and by the *last*, we look forward to what is to come. All which were designed for the safety of the Soul; that we might grow wise by what is past,

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past, improve what is present, and prepare for what is future. But when Sin hath once got the ascendant in the Soul, all these three Operations are stopped; at least greatly interrupted, with regard to any Benefit the Soul can receive by them. It takes from the Sinner all Reflection, Consideration and Foresight, about the state of his Soul, or the concerns of his Salvation. At least, his *Reflections* are so inaccurate and confused, that he takes no Warnings by his past Sins and Dangers; his *Consideration* is so slight and superficial, that he is seldom or very little touched with the Rebukes and Admonitions of God's Word and Providences; and his *Foresight* so short and ineffectual, that he is little concerned about what is to come; or what is like to be his future Condition forever. Or if he *foresees* the Evil, he hath not the Power or the Wisdom to *avoid it*.

Such miserable Havock doth Sin make in the Soul in which it predominates. So sadly doth it disguise it, and disorder all it's Faculties. A Man rendered weak and unfit for any Service, and pining away apace under the ghastly Symptoms of a hasty Consumption, is but a faint Emblem of a Sinner whose
Soul

Soul lies in a weak, helpless, languid, dying Condition under the Power of Sin.

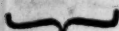
2. Sickneſs always *brings Pain and Suffering* to the Body; ſo doth Sin to the Soul. Which is another inſtance in which the Simile is very natural.

I need not deſcribe the Pains which bodily Sickneſs brings with it. We know them too well by Experience: only you may obſerve they are of two Sorts; (*viz.*) thoſe which it brings of itſelf, and thoſe which it occasions by the means that are proper and neceſſary for it's Cure. And both theſe kinds of Pain doth Sin bring upon the Soul.

1. It often brings Pain and Suffering *immediately along with it*. For there are ſome Vices which in their own Nature give immediate Anguiſh to the Mind, and carry their own Torment along with them; ſuch as Paſſion, Envy, Malice, Hatred, &c. And almoſt all other Sins produce it as their neceſſary Effect even in this Life. So Avarice and Worldly-mindedneſs diſtract the Soul, and betray it into a thouſand Snares and Diſquietudes it might otherwiſe avoid. And Pride, Intemperance and Idleneſs have Mortification, Miſery and Diſtreſs following them

SERM.

II.



close at their Heels. In short, Sin puts all the Passions of the Mind (as a Distemper does the Humours of the Body) into a Flame and Ferment, which create very painful perturbations there. Besides,

2. When Vice tyrannizes in the Heart, it lays the foundation of still greater Pain in those *bitter Remorses of Repentance which is it's only Cure*. What painful Operations and severe Mortifications is the sick Man often obliged to submit to for the Recovery of his Health! He sometimes feels more Pain from the Remedy, than he hath yet done from the Disease. And submits to it only to prevent the Disease from becoming fatal.

Just so it is with one who hath long accustomed himself to Sin, and lived under the power of it. Much hath he suffered from it already; but more must he suffer to be cured of it: which can only be by a sincere Repentance, which will cost him great Mortification, Self-denial and Sorrow.

And under this Head I shall just observe, that as no Distempers of the Body can be cured but by resolutely abstaining from those ill Habits of Excess and Intemperance which

occa-

occasioned them; so there can be no true Repentance (which is the only cure of the Soul) without immediately breaking off those sinful Practices and Customs which have brought it into so wretched a Condition. But to proceed with the Parallel.

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3. The Diseases of the Mind may be compared to those of the Body, as they are what *we are not able of ourselves to get rid off.*

We often know not the nature of our Disease; or what particular Distemper it is that raises such a Disorder in our animal Frame. Or if we do, we may not know perhaps what is proper to abate it's Force, or remove it. And the weak state into which we are thereby reduced renders us, in a great measure, unable to help ourselves: so that we stand in great need of the Advice and Assistance of others.

Into such a state now doth Sin reduce the Soul. It finds itself disordered and weakened in it's several Powers and Faculties; incapable of exerting itself with it's wonted life and vigour in the duties and exercises of Religion; feels it's spiritual Strength decayed, and a sad Languor attending it in

SERM. all it's holy Functions: evident Symptoms
II. that ſome way or other, it is become much

diſtempered. And yet perhaps it may not be ſenſible of the nature of it's Diſtemper; or what particular Sin, or complication of Sins, hath occaſioned it; or what is the beſt way to be freed from it. Or if it does know this, it is ſo enfeebled that it can do but little for itſelf; and by many unſucceſſful Efforts is convinced that it ſtands in need of ſome more effectual aſſiſtance in order to it's Recovery. However,

4. I would further obſerve, that though a perſon labouring under a bodily Diſtemper is not able to do much for himſelf, yet *there are ſome things* which he may do towards his Recovery, and which, if he ſincerely deſires to be recovered, he will do.

He may refrain from that kind of Diet which inflames the Diſtemper, though it be ever ſo grateful, and take thoſe kind of Medicines which are proper to abate it's Force, though ever ſo diſtaſteful. He may apply to the moſt ſkilful Phyſician in his reach, and follow his Directions, and continue in the Courſe preſcribed by him till, by the
Bleſſing

Blessing of GOD, he recovers his wonted Health. SERM.
II.

In like manner the Sinner; though he cannot effectually help himself, or deliver himself from the power of Sin, yet there are many things which, even in his present state of Inability and Guilt, he may do in order thereunto; and which, were he but as sensible of the Sicknefs of his Soul, as he is of that of his Body, he readily would do. For instance, he may refrain from many open acts of Sin, and shun the known occasions of them; he may abstain from many criminal Gratifications, though ever so agreeable to his depraved taste; and use many means proper for subduing his vicious Habits, though ever so repugnant to his corrupt Propensions. He may attend the ordinary means of Grace, which GOD himself hath appointed for the Cure of his spiritual Maladies; and apply to the great Physician of Souls for his sovereign Grace to make those means effectual. All this he may do, and is required to do, and must do if he would have his Soul cured of the Distemper of Sin. And in this respect the Parallel is very just. I add,

SERM.

II.

5. When the Body is perfectly recovered of a dangerous Distemper, it is commonly more strong and healthy afterwards than it was before.

By the means that had been used for it's Recovery, it is cleared of those gross and ill Humours which had been long contributing towards it's Illness, and so becomes more healthy and sound than ever.

So when the Soul, by the Grace of G O D. and a hearty Repentance, is recovered from some great and grievous Fall, it not only regains it's former Strength, but gains greater. Is more refined from the Dregs of Corruption, and becomes more watchful and cautious and steady in it's future Walk: more holy and humble and heavenly in it's Temper. Which is very observable in the Spirit and Behaviour of *David* and *Peter* after their Repentance.

Lastly, Sicknefs, if it be not cured, proves at last the *Death of the Body*: so Sin, if it be not subdued, at last proves the *Death of the Soul*.

The death of the Body is it's Separation from the Soul; and the death of the Soul is it's Separation from G O D. Because as the
Life

of the Soul.

51

Life of the Body consists in it's Union with the Soul by certain Laws and Bonds to us unknown; so the Life of the Soul consists in it's Union with GOD by Faith and Holiness.

SERM.

II.

And having thus particularly considered Sin as the *Sickness* of the Soul, I should now proceed,

II. To consider Christ as the *Physician* of it.

But this must be the subject of the following Discourse. In the mean time I shall close all with a few Remarks upon what hath been said. And,

I. Having shewn you, in several instances, that there is a very plain and obvious Resemblance between the Sickness of the Body and that of the Soul, it is but just that I observe to you that there are some instances wherein there is as great a *Dissimilitude or Difference between them.*

I shall but just mention three.

1. Men are generally more sensible of their bodily Distempers than they are of those of their Souls.

Though the *latter* are really as much more grievous than the *former*, as Sin is a greater Evil than Suffering.

D 4

2. Men

SERM.

II.

2. Men are generally more willing and more heartily desirous to be delivered from their bodily Distempers than from their spiritual ones.

And the reason of this I have just mentioned; *viz.* because they are generally more sensible of them.

3. Some Distempers of the Body evade all the power of Medicines, and baffle the Skill of the most able Physicians, and are absolutely incurable: whereas under every Distemper of the Soul there are the most sovereign Remedies, and a never-failing Physician at hand who is always ready to help us.

What those Remedies are, and who that Physician is, will be seen in the following Discourse. In the mean time I proceed with my Remarks.

II. This Subject may suggest to us many useful Thoughts, and may be improved by us for our Comfort and Instruction under every Illness or Distemper that may hereafter befall us.

What a sad Variety of Pain and Sicknefs do we see Mortality subject to! and what kind or measure of them may fall to our share

share before *we are absent from the Body*, we know not. However, as they are designed for wise Ends, so they are capable of being improved to very good purposes, whilst we reflect with ourselves thus :

“ How grievous is this Affliction to my
“ Body ! O that Sin were as grievous to my
“ Soul !——Alas ! How much more sensible
“ am I of Suffering than of Sin ! though the
“ *latter* is by far the greater evil : because it
“ is the cause of the *former* ; for had there
“ been no Sin, there had been no Suffering.
“ ——This Disease of my Body, perhaps,
“ was sent to cure the Disease of my Soul.
“ Lord, let that be the Effect. And I will
“ submit to and bless the *Remedy*. The
“ most effectual Medicines are sometimes
“ the most distasteful.——How desirous am
“ I to have this bodily disorder removed ? O
“ that I were as desirous to have the Dis-
“ tempers of my Soul cured ! How assidu-
“ ously do I apply to a Physician for my
“ Body, and punctually follow his Prescrip-
“ tions and Directions to regain my Health !
“ O that I could but as earnestly by Faith
“ and Prayer apply to Christ, the sovereign
“ Physician of Souls, and as carefully ob-
“ serve

SERM. "serve the infallible Directions of his Word
II. "and Spirit."

I shall conclude all with one Remark more. And that is,

III. What hath been delivered upon this Subject does very happily illustrate one great Truth, which Scripture seems plainly to reveal, but which some have found it difficult to conceive of; and that is this, *That though a Sinner's Destruction be owing to himself, yet his Salvation is owing to the free Grace of G O D.*

I say, what hath been delivered illustrates this Principle, and sets it in a plain and easy Light. For when a Person, by applying to an able Physician, and carefully following his Directions, is raised up from a dangerous Fit of Illness, is he said for that reason to cure himself? No, next to the Blessing of G O D, his Recovery is justly attributed to the Physician to whom he applied; but, had he not applied to him, and used the proper means for his Recovery, he might be justly said to have cast himself away; especially if he had brought the Distemper upon himself. So when a Sinner, by applying

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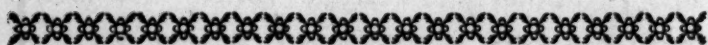
ing to Christ by Faith and Prayer, and following the Directions of his Word and Spirit, is delivered from the power of Sin, which would otherwise prove the Death of his Soul, his Salvation cannot be attributed to himself, but to Christ alone; whereas, had he not thus applied to him, his Condemnation and Ruin would have been owing to himself.





S E R M O N III.

CHRIST the PHYSICIAN of the SOUL.



LUKE V. 31.

*And Jesus answering said unto them,
they that are whole need not a Phy-
sician : but they that are sick.*



IN these Words of our Saviour, I observed, there are two Propositions plainly implied, viz.

- I. That Sin is the Sickneſs of the Soul.
- II. That Chriſt is the Phyſician of it.

The firſt of theſe Propositions I have endeavour'd to open and improve in the preceding

eeding Discourse, and shall now apply myself directly to the second, viz.

SERM.

III.

That Christ is the Physician of Souls.

Having viewed our Malady, let us now turn our Eyes to the Remedy. For though Sin be our Disease, Christ is our Physician. This is the character he assumes to himself in the text; and under this character we are now particularly to consider him. *The whole* (saith he) *have no need of a Physician, but they that are sick.* This is a character and office that as properly belongs to him, as those of *Prophet, Priest, and King*; though it be not so often taken Notice of.

My design at present then is, particularly to improve this Thought; to present it in various Views, and set it in a plain, familiar Light; in order to enhance our Love and Esteem for the great Redeemer, and convince us of our need of him. And here,

I. Let us consider how suitably this Office belongs to him.

II. What distinguishing marks of Preheminence are peculiar to him under this Character.

III. What

Christ the Physician

III. What Regards are due to him from us as our spiritual Physician.

Lastly, I shall make a practical Improvement of the Subject.

I. Let us consider how suitably this Office belongs to him.

And that this Character properly belongs to him, appears from his very Name, *Jesus*, which signifies a *Saviour*; and from his great Design in coming into the World, which was to *save Sinners*, 1 Tim. i. 15. or to *save his People from their Sins*, Matth. i. 21. for he is their *Saviour* only as he is their *Physician*. By saving them from *Sin*, he saves them from *Death*. The Physician's Office, is to save the Body from Death; the Office of Christ, for which he came into the World, was to save our Souls from Death: To heal their Diseases, restore their Health, and recover them to Life and Happiness.

And this he does three Ways, *viz.* by his *Word*, by his *Spirit*, and by his *Grace*. By the *first* he convinces them of their need of a Cure; by the *second* he persuades them to accept it; and by the *last* he actually applies it.

1. Christ

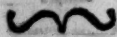
1. Christ as their Physician recovers the Souls of Sinners by his *Word*. This is ordinarily the first means he uses for their Recovery. Whereby he convinces them, or makes them sensible of their Danger or Malady, and the need they stand in of his Grace for their Cure and Recovery. The Word of GOD is profitable for *Conviction* of Sin, as well as *Instruction* in *Righteousness*.

If we judge of Sin only by the common notions of Men, we shall be very apt to form a wrong Judgment of it. In that view it may appear to us a light and trivial, if not a harmless and inoffensive thing. And the frequent observance thereof in others, who live unconcernedly in it, is too apt to take off that horror of it from our Minds, which we should ever entertain.

Whereas the Word of GOD represents it to us in a very different Light; as exceeding vile and odious in it's Nature; infinitely destructive in it's Consequences; most hateful to GOD, and most hurtful to our Souls. It sets before us the ruinous tendency, the pernicious effects, and the dreadful demerit of it; And plainly shews the Sinner, that nothing but eternal Death and Misery can be the Confe-

SERM.

III.



Consequence of his loving and allowing it. For however the World, and a Man's deluded Heart may flatter him, the Word of GOD will not. But tells him plainly, that *neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters, nor Adulterers, nor Thieves, nor Covetous, nor Drunkards, nor Revilers, nor Extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of GOD, 1 Cor. vi. 9. That Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish, shall be rendered to every Soul of Man that doth Evil: That doth not obey the Truth, but obeyeth Unrighteousness, Rom. ii. 8, 9. And, that GOD will render to every Man according to his Deeds, ver. 6.*

These plain and absolute Warnings tend to awaken the Sinner's Conscience, and to convince him of the Need he stands in of divine Grace for his Help and Recovery. Just as a person languishing under a fatal Distemper, that is continually growing upon him, from a sense of present Pain, and a prospect of approaching Death, cries out, "O! what shall I do for Help? where shall I apply for Ease and Health?" So the sensible Sinner, under a Conviction of his Guilt and Danger, of the unimagined Evil of Sin, and the infinite Misery it is bringing upon him,

him, cries out with the awakened Jailor, O! *what shall I do to be saved?* "How shall I
"escape the Wrath of a justly incensed God,
"which my Sins have provoked, and which
"I now see pointed at my guilty Head ready
"to blast me?" And this now leads him
to the Remedy which the Gospel hath pro-
vided, and shews him his need of the Grace
it freely offers for his Help and Recovery;
to heal and save his Soul.

And it is with such a Conviction of Sin,
and of the need of Grace and Pardon, that
the Recovery of the Sinner usually begins.
And this first step towards his Cure, *viz.* a
thorough sense of his Distemper and Danger,
Christ our spiritual *Physician* generally effects
by his Word: by setting home upon the
Conscience of the Sinner, with a divine Ef-
ficacy, some Portion of Scripture, either in
hearing, reading or meditating, which is suit-
ably adapted to the true state of his Soul;
and thereby exciting in him a deep and du-
rable sense of the greatness of his Danger, to
which he never before attended.

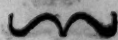
2. Another means which Christ makes use
of as the *Physician* of Souls for the Recovery
of Sinners is, the *inward Influence and Opera-*

SERM.

III.

tion of his Spirit. Whereby they are effectually persuaded to accept of that Grace, which they were before convinced was so needful for their Salvation, and to comply with whatever is necessary in order hereunto. This now carries on the work a good degree further, and is another considerable step towards the Sinner's Recovery. The former without this is nothing but a mere Conviction, such as *Ezekiel's* Hearers, *Herod* and *Felix* had, which soon decayed, and came to nothing; which struck some Light into the Understanding, and made some Impressions on the Conscience, but never gained the Will.

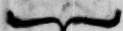
There are none, perhaps, if the Question were put to them, *Are you willing to be saved by Jesus Christ*; but would readily answer in the Affirmative. But were the Question to be urged more closely; *Will you then comply with, and submit to, those things which are absolutely necessary to your Interest in that Salvation?* Were they sensible what it is to be saved (as they who are seriously convinced by the word of God, as before mentioned, are supposed to be) they must directly answer in the Affirmative still. But were the Question to be pressed home still more particularly;



ticularly; *Will you resolve then, by divine Grace, immediately to break off that Course of Sin you have lived in, whatever Mortification it may cost you? and conscientiously practise those Duties of Piety and Virtue you have so long neglected, whatever Difficulties may discourage you? will you constantly oppose your darling Sin, and carefully avoid every Temptation that leads to it?* The Reason, the Understanding, and Conscience of the Sinner will still answer, *YES.* And there may be for a while, not only a ready Purpose, but some faint *Efforts* towards this; but as there remains still a secret Reluctance in the Will, and a carnal Bias on the Heart, *that* by degrees will gain the better of all the dictates of natural Reason and Conscience, and insensibly bring back the Soul to it's wonted Indolence, Stupidity and Neglect. So that the most hopeful Prospects, and the fairest Beginnings of Goodness, may be lost, and *like the Morning Cloud or early Dew* soon pass away; and all for want of the *Will* being gained over, and thoroughly wrought upon, by divine Grace, which is freely offered to Sinners by the occasional Operations and Influences of the holy Spirit upon their Minds:

SERM.

III.



which if not rejected, but sincerely improved, will effectually correct this obliquity of the Will, and dispose it heartily and constantly to comply with every thing necessary to Salvation.

Lastly, The Sinner being thus made heartily willing to accept of the Grace of Christ, as necessary to his Recovery, *Christ then completes it by actually bestowing that Grace upon him* : which enables him to do what before he was so sincerely *willing* to do, in order to his Salvation. Whereby he finds most of the Difficulties that before threatened him, to vanish, and the rest to be much less than he apprehended.

And as this divine Grace which renews, sanctifies, quickens and confirms the Soul, is that to which the Recovery and Salvation of it from Sin and Death is supremely owing, and as this is the Gift of GOD, freely offered to all that will accept it; hence it is that our Salvation in Scripture is so often attributed to it. Eph. ii. 8. *By Grace are ye saved. I can do all things*, saith the Apostle, *through Christ which strengtheneth me*, Phil. iv. 13. *By the Grace of GOD I am what I am*, 1 Cor xv. 10.

Now

Now this Grace, as it is freely offered to all, so it may be resisted by some. And actually is by those who *reject the Counsel of GOD against themselves, and judge themselves unworthy of eternal Life*; who persist impenitently in their Sins, and refuse to comply with the saving methods of the Gospel.

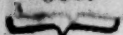
SERM.

III.

And to this indeed, and to this only, is the Condemnation of Sinners owing; that they obstinately stand out against the Admonitions of GOD's Word and Spirit: and refuse the Grace that is freely offered to save them. Were it never offered them, they would indeed have something to plead at the Bar of GOD in arrest of Judgment. But the Consciousness of their having often rejected it, when it had been so freely and frequently offered, is that which will render them self-condemned and speechless there. Thus you see how the Salvation of Sinners is owing to the Grace of GOD; but their Condemnation to themselves. When a Patient is raised up from a dangerous Distemper, by taking the proper Medicines administered to him, it is the Physician, not himself, to whom the Cure is to be ascribed; but if he dies, by obstinately refusing to take

SERM.

III.



his Remedies, his Death may properly be said to be owing to himself. So a Sinner that is saved by the effectual Grace of Christ hath no more room to boast that he saves himself, than a dying Patient hath that is wonderfully recovered by the Skill, Care and Kindness of his Physician. So that all *Boasting is excluded even by the Law of Faith*, as the Apostle tells us, Rom. iii. 27.

Thus you see in what manner Christ acts in quality of the *Physician of Souls*, and how properly that Character belongs to him. It arises from his Character of a *Saviour*. For his great Design in coming into the World, was to *save Sinners*. Which he does by *convincing them by his Word, persuading them by his Spirit*, and then *actually bestowing upon them that Grace which effectually recovers them*, and renders them meet to partake of that Salvation which he hath purchased for them. I now proceed,

II. To consider some of the peculiar and distinguishing Properties which belong to Christ under this Character of the Physician of Souls.

Which

Which are such as these: He is the most *able* and *skilful*, the most *tender* and *compassionate*, the most *faithful* and *friendly*, the most *willing* and *condescending* Physician. — Of each of these briefly.

I. He is a most *able* and *skilful* Physician. The Skill of a Physician consists in his understanding the nature of Distempers in their various Symptoms and Appearances, the Habit and Strength of his Patient's Constitution, together with an exact Knowledge of the virtue of his Medicines, the Manner how, the Quantity in which, and the Time when to apply them. If he does know the virtue of his Medicines, yet if he be ignorant of his Patient's Constitution, or mistake the nature of his Distemper, he may kill, instead of cure. Or if he understand all three, the Distemper, Constitution, and Medicine, yet if he knows not how to compound, mix and temper it, or when is the properest time to apply it, he may do more Harm than Good. A mistake in any one of these Cases may prevent the desired effects, and be attended with very bad ones.

But none of these Cases now can be hid from Christ our spiritual Physician, who is

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the only infallible One. There is not a Distemper our Souls are subject to, but he knows it, with all it's concomitant Symptoms, and the various stages of it's Progress; and that much better than we do ourselves. From the exact Knowledge he hath of the natural Temper and Constitution of our Minds, he sees very well what we are able to undergo in the course of our Cure, and what Medicines are most proper to effect it: whether rough and severe, or mild and gentle methods are fittest to work upon us. He precisely knows the virtue of all the means he uses for our Recovery from Sin and Death, and what effect they have upon us; the true nature of all the Medicines he applies, and the critical Time to apply them. And from his most perfect Knowledge of these things, we have all the reason in the World to confide in him as our spiritual Physician, and trust our distempered Souls in his Hands. And may apply to him with the same Faith and Confidence the poor Leper did, *Mat. viii. 2.* saying, *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*

2. Christ is not only the most able and skilful, but the most *tender* and *compassionate* Physician.

Physician. When we send for a Physician SERM,
III.
for our Bodies we sometimes know not
whom we trust. Or if we are satisfied of
his Skill, we may doubt his Tenderness.
He may prescribe the most severe and cruel
Means and Operations, and those unnecessa-
ry too, without any regard to our Weak-
ness, or exquisite Sensibility of Pain, so that
the Distemper itself may be more support-
able to Nature, than the terrible Methods
that are used for the Cure of it.

But our spiritual Physician is most tender
and compassionate; and hath this Property
peculiar to him, that he exactly knows
what we feel; knows every degree of Pain
we suffer, either from the Distemper itself, or
from the Means used to remove it. Nay,
more than this, he feels it himself. His
tender Heart is touched with a Sympathy,
which makes him, in a degree, feel the Pain
himself, which, as our Physician, he is obli-
ged, from the Nature of the Distemper, to
make us bear, in order to a Cure of it. So
the Apostle tells us, *Heb. iv. 15.* that *he is*
touched with a feeling of our Infirmities; that
is, of our Weaknesses and Sufferings. Sure
then we have no reason to be afraid to ven-
ture

SERM. ture ourselves under his Hands, or to trust
 III. our Souls to his Care and Cure. Especially
 if we add,

3. That he is the most *faithful* and *friendly* Physician. One who hath an Interest in our Health and Recovery, and of all things most desires it. He not only takes care of us as a Physician, but loves us as a Friend; and frequently visits us under both those Capacities. He hath no sinister or mercenary views in his constant Attendance. It is not the Consideration of any Profit or Credit that may accrue to him from our Recovery, that makes him so assiduous and careful in waiting upon us. But it is his Love to us, his Friendship for us, his sincere Desire of, and the Interest he hath in our Recovery, as the Friend, as well as the Physician, of our Souls. And dare we not trust ourselves in the Hands of our Friend, our most faithful Friend? whose Fidelity is equal to his Ability! As our Friend, he comforts and assists us under our spiritual Weaknesses; whilst, as our Physician, he administers to the Cure and Removal of them. And therefore we may be sure he will use no Methods of Severity but what are most necessary,

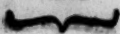
fary, and will never fail to administer the most-reviving Cordials when they are most seasonable and needful. Again,

4. He is the most *willing* and *condescending* Physician. Which is a Quality not always to be found in some of the Faculty we are obliged to apply to for the Cure of our bodily Diseases; but is evidently found in him, who is more ready and desirous to heal us, than we are to be healed by him. He stays not for a formal Message from us, but kindly comes and offers himself to us as the Physician of our Souls; and not only so, but entreats us to accept him as such; because he knows, that without his Help our Souls will perish.

Nay further, when we profess to put ourselves under his Care, and appear reluctant to his Prescriptions, and backward to follow his Directions (which is too often the Case,) such is his Condescension and Goodness, that he importunes and beseeches us to make use of the Means which he sees absolutely necessary for our Recovery. And what is more, he hath not disdained to stoop to the lowest Offices, nay, to undergo the greatest Sufferings, for the Recovery of our Souls from

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III.



from Death. Such is the Kindness and Condescension of our spiritual Physician. I will only add,

5. That such a Physician as this *is always at Hand*. The Physicians for our Bodies, be they ever so able, or faithful, or willing, may yet, at some times, be at a great distance from us, and cannot be had; or at the time of our greatest Extremity may be necessarily engaged in their Attendance on others. Or their Terms may be so high, that our Circumstances in Life will not permit us to make use of their Advice and Help. But Christ is a Physician *always at hand and not afar off*; always at liberty to attend our Complaints, and give us his Visits and Advice in every place and state of Life. Are our Circumstances and Situation in Life such, as necessarily deprive us of the Comfort and Presence of our earthly Friends and Physicians? they can never deprive us of the Comfort and Presence of Christ, who is at once the Friend and Physician of our Souls. The Distinctions of High and Low, Rich and Poor, Noble and Ignoble, which make so mighty a Difference among Men in the Eye of the World, are not to be found among
Souls

Souls as such; and therefore our spiritual Physician makes no Difference in his Regards to, or Care of them. All Souls, as immortal Beings, are equally valuable in themselves, and in his Eye. He hath the same Concern for the Soul of the poorest Peasant, as he hath for that of the most potent Prince, and is as ready to help and heal it.

These now are some of those excellent and distinguishing Properties which are peculiar to Christ, as the Physician of our Souls; which, in proportion as they enhance that Character, should increase our Value for him, and encourage our Application to him.

Sometimes the Distress and Trouble of our Souls may be such, as that all our earthly Friends, however tender, compassionate and faithful, cannot administer to us any Relief or Comfort. And we may have reason to say of them, as *Job* said of his, *Miserable Comforters are ye all; ye are all Physicians of no Value*, *Job* xiii. 4. But this can never be said of the *wise*, and *tender*, *faithful*, *kind*, and *ready* Physician of our Souls, who is always as able as he is willing to heal and save them; and always
more

SERM. more willing than we are to be healed and
 III. saved by him.

But as this Relation in which the Redeemer stands to us, requires a correspondent Duty on our part, I shall now proceed, as I proposed,

III. To shew what Regards are due to him from us, as our spiritual Physician.

This I shall briefly dispatch under the following Heads. If Christ be the Physician of our Souls; then we are to *apply to him* as such, *trust his faithfulness, submit to his Directions, and follow his Prescriptions.*

I. We are to *apply to him* as the Physician of our Souls; which we shall readily do, when we are once sensible of their Malady. And that, upon such an Application, he will as readily come to our Relief, appears very certain from what hath been already said. Nay, he often prevents us, by freely offering himself to us as the Physician of our Souls. But then he will never come to any without their Consent. He will not force himself upon them: nor save or recover any against their Wills. There must be a voluntary Application, or at least a hearty

heartly Consent on our part, ere we can enjoy the Benefit of his healing Power. He often, as I observed before, uses many Instances and Persuasions, by his Word and Spirit, to make us willing to accept him (for in this Sense it is that he offers himself to us); but till we are willing, and in consequence thereof apply to him by Faith and humble Prayer, for his Grace and effectual Help, we have no reason to expect it. Nor can we think that he will ever be backward to come to us if we thus invite him, who hath condescended to invite us to come to him, *Matth. xi. 28.*

2. Is Christ ~~faithful~~ *faithful* and *able* a Physician as beforementioned, then we ought to *trust* him as such; securely venture our Souls on him, and commit all their eternal Interests into his Hands, and confide in his Care and Wisdom as an all-sufficient Helper.

Not that this supersedes our own Endeavours, renders our own Care needless, or will excuse the least Neglect on our part. No! there is no Physician on Earth that requires his Patient to trust him in this manner; but on the contrary, it is expected that he do all he can to help himself; take care
he

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he does nothing to increase his Disease, inflame his Distemper, or prevent the Effect of the Medicines prescribed him; but punctually observe the Rules and Orders given him for the Management of himself. Otherwise he may provoke his Physician to withdraw his Visits, and leave him to himself as one that obstinately resolves not to be cured. So, if from a pretence of trusting to Christ we take no care for ourselves; if under Colour of depending on his Grace, which is all-sufficient to save us, we counter-act the Intention of it by continuing in Sin, which hath a direct Tendency to ruin us; instead of honouring his Grace, we abuse it: we *tempt*, instead of *trusting* him. This is not Faith, but Presumption. And hereby we may provoke him finally to withdraw from us.

In short, we are to trust Christ as our Physician in the use of his own Means, and not without them; to do all we can for ourselves, even whilst we look for the effectual Cure from him: shew our Trust in him by a diligent use of his means, and not by a Neglect of them. Thus would we trust the Physician of our Bodies; thus
we

we should trust the Physician of our Souls. Therefore,

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3. If Christ is our Physician, we are then to submit to, and follow his *Prescriptions*, and readily comply with all the Methods he is pleased to make use of for the Recovery of our Souls to a state of Health and Soundness. Some of those Methods which are very necessary to this End, may be very disagreeable. Afflictions are often a necessary Means to this End. And though none of them are for the present joyous but grievous; yet, being sent to work out for us the peaceable Fruits of Righteousness, they ought not only to be quietly, but thankfully submitted to. Let us not refuse the salutary Potion, because it is unpleasant. Whatever bitter Ingredients there may be in the Cup, which our divine Physician puts into our Hands, since it is he that prescribes it, we may be sure it is for our Good. And to refuse it, because of its disagreeable Relish, is to question his Skill, or Kindness, or both; and to refuse to take him for our Physician.

Lastly, If we take Christ for our spiritual Physician, we are bound not only to follow his *Prescriptions for the present*, but his *Di-*

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rections for the future: or those Rules he hath laid down for the future Regulation of our Lives. It is usual with all the Faculty, not only to prescribe for their Patients medicinal Remedies, but to lay them under a *dietetic Regimen:* that is, give them such Rules for the Management of themselves with regard to their Food or Diet, which may prevent the Return of their former Disorders, and preserve them in a state of Health and Vigour. Such Rules and such Directions hath Christ left us in his Word for the Preservation of our spiritual Health: which we are as much concerned to comply with to prevent a Relapse, as with the Means he prescribes to procure our Recovery.

Whoever then disregards the Rules and Directions of Christ's Gospel, or takes no care to regulate his Temper and Practice by them, he doth therein virtually disown Christ for his Physician; and discovers no proper Sense of his need of him under that Character.

And thus have I laid before you, in a plain View, several Thoughts which seemed naturally to rise from this Subject; which I shall

shall now conclude with a few Reflexions
by way of Application.

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APPLICATION.

We have been particularly considering the Character under which Christ hath been pleased to represent himself in the text, as the *Physician of Souls*: and have seen how properly and *eminently* that Character belongs to him; and what are the Duties and Regards we owe him *as such*. And now from what hath been said we learn,

1. The Reason why our Salvation in Scripture is made so necessarily to depend on Christ. His great Character is, *the Saviour of Souls*. And he is so called, because he hath purchased Salvation for them by his Blood, and fits them for that Salvation by his Grace. Without the latter, their Salvation would be incomplete, or rather impossible. In the former respect, he is the Redeemer; in the latter, the Healer of their Souls. So that he must be our *Physician*, before he can be our *Saviour*. Or he is our Saviour by being our Physician. He first delivers us from the Power and Dominion of Sin, and

SERM. then from the Guilt and Condemnation of

III.

it. Nor can any have an Interest in him, as their Saviour, who do not submit to him as their Physician. A Truth of unexceptionable Evidence and Importance; and deserves to be seriously attended to by every one who desires to understand and comply with that Method of Salvation which is constituted and revealed in the Gospel of Christ.

2. From what hath been said we see how vain a thing it is to expect Salvation from Christ whilst we continue in Sin, or take no care to subdue and mortify it. Those Persons shew themselves very ignorant of the Constitution of the Gospel, and the Method of Salvation contained therein, who desire only an Interest in the Blood of Christ for the Pardon of their Sins, without a hearty Concern for his Grace to subdue them. To take occasion to sin because Grace hath abounded, is to counter-act and reverse the grand Design of the Gospel; which was to make us holy, in order to make us happy. Nor indeed is it possible for Happiness to be attained any other way. The Body is as capable of enjoying Ease and pleasure under
a griev-

a grievous and growing Distemper, as the Soul is of enjoying Happiness whilst it is under the power of Sin. No, let us ever remember it; whatever our Hope in Christ is, he must be our Physician before he can be our Saviour; and whatever our Notions of Sin are, it will be our Ruin if it be not subdued. It is of infinite Importance rightly to settle our Notions of these Things, in which our everlasting Interests are so much concerned; and to determine our Practice, Views and Hopes accordingly.

3. What hath been delivered upon this Subject, may serve to reconcile us to some things that may at present appear difficult and disagreeable, as our Natures now are, which nevertheless are necessary to recover them to a more perfect State. Patients must not expect to be always supported with high Cordials. The most distasteful Draughts are sometimes more necessary. Religion, especially the first Entrance upon it, or the first Recovery of the Soul from a State of Sin, is not so easy a matter as some may imagine. From the nature of the Case it appears that many painful Mortifications must be endured, much Self-denial exercised, ere

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the Soul can be recovered from a state of Sick-
ness to a state of Health. But such is the Gentleness and Fidelity of our divine Physician, that we may be sure he will use no Methods that are more severe than necessary, nor continue them longer than is needful.

4. From what hath been said, we see the true method of Salvation constituted in the Gospel: and have a plain answer to that important Question, *What must I do to be saved?* Our Souls can no otherwise be saved from Death, than by being cured of those Distempers which are the Fore-runners of it. And the ordinary way in which they are cured of those fatal Distempers is that which hath now been laid before you. That is to say, we must first be *thoroughly sensible of our Danger thereby*; for which the Word of GOD is given us: and then be *heartily willing to accept the Remedy offered*; to which end the holy Spirit is oftentimes at work on our Hearts: and then *actually accept the Grace of Christ, which is freely exhibited and tendered to us*: and by that Grace continue *to follow the Directions, and live according to the holy Rules of GOD's Word*, which are pre-

prescribed us in order to perfect our Recovery, and prevent our Relapse. SERM. III.

If there be any Mortifications in this way, they are only such as arise from the Necessity of the Case. Whatever other Methods of Salvation some may fondly imagine to themselves, let me only say it is extremely dangerous to trust to them. And a Mistake here, as it is irretrievable, so it is of everlasting Detriment. The Soul once lost is for ever lost. And indeed if we consult the Word of GOD impartially; if we consider but the Reason of Things, the Nature of true Happiness, the Perfections of the divine Being, and wherein the proper Felicity of the Soul consists, we shall soon be convinced, that nothing less than the Remedy which the Gospel proposes, and of which I have just given you a short Abstract, can secure it's everlasting Salvation.

What remains then, but that whilst we contemplate this Character, under which Christ is pleased to represent himself, we esteem, honour, love and value him as the great *Physician of our Souls*; apply to him as such; trust our Souls in his Hands; follow the Directions of his Word and Spi-

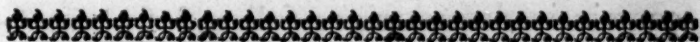
SERM. rit, in a constant Dependence on his Grace
 III. and Help; and we have then a solid Foundation on which to build our Hope. For our Recovery from Sin is our fitness for Happiness. And we have the Word of our great Physician for it, that if we thus come to him, we shall not perish but have everlasting Life.

*How forward to apply to a
 Physician for our bodily disorders. How
 backward to apply to Christ to cure
 the sicknesses of our souls. & why we
 feel the former, not the latter. we
 seldom think of him in such a light
 as duty or
 on doubt of his readiness here to
 or chro
 Loathness to follow
 his prescriptions as we serve
 So many are conceited enough to
 think they are whole & so need not a
 Physician. they know not their case nor
 danger. & thus many die & perish: 1771*



S E R M O N IV.

The future HAPPINESS of the
R I G H T E O U S.



P S A L M xcvi. II.

*Light is sown for the Righteous;
and Gladness for the Upright in
Heart.*



HERE is a Force and Fulness
in some Scripture Phrases and
Expressions that is not easy to be
exhausted; insomuch that the
more we attend to them, the more we learn
from them; and discover something new al-
most every time we carefully consider them.
An Excellency peculiar to the sacred Wri-
tings,

SERM. tings, and justly urged as a good Argument
IV. of their divine Authority.

For an Instance of this, I need only refer you to the *Lord's Prayer*; a Form so full and comprehensive, so particular and expressive, that it is not in the Power or Wisdom of Man to compose any thing like it; as any one may see who hath read a good Comment on that part of Scripture.

The Words prefix'd to this Discourse is another Instance of the same kind; which contain in them a more full and fruitful Instruction than it is possible for any one to discern at first reading; which will be my Apology for insisting upon them longer than I usually chuse to do upon one Text.

They may be considered as an independent Proposition, in which the following things are to be observed.

- I. The Character that is here given of good Men, They are *Righteous* and *Upright*.
- II. Their present state implied, *viz. Darkness* and *Sorrow*.
- III. Their future state expressed, *viz. Light* and *Gladness*.

Lastly,

Lastly, The Metaphor under which this is described. *Light is sown for the Righteous.*

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Of each of these particularly. Let us briefly consider,

I. The Character that is here given of good Men. They are *Righteous* and *Upright*.

Which Words may stand,

1. As Terms of the same Import and Signification. Every Righteous Man is an Upright Man; and the Upright Man is the only Righteous Man. Or,

2. They may be put as explanative of each other. The righteous and the upright Man is the *sincerely* righteous Man. Not one who is so in Reputation and Appearance only, but in *deed and in truth*; who (*esse quàm videri bonus maluit*) takes more care to *be* good than *appear* so; who is not only righteous in Life, but *upright in Heart*.

It is very possible for a Man to appear Righteous before some Men, who is not Upright before GOD. And it is as possible for one who is truly upright before GOD, not to appear righteous in the Eyes of all Men.

Because

SERM. Because all Men do not judge righteously;
 IV. and no man infallibly.

The righteous and the upright Man then, is one who not only appears so in the Eyes of Men, but is sincerely so in the Eye of GOD. One in whose Heart *there is no Guile*; no Deceit or Hypocrisy; no latent or allowed Iniquity; who takes as much Care to approve his Heart to GOD, as to approve his Life to Men; who hath Truth *in his inward Part*, as well as Righteousness in his outward Conduct. This is that which forms the Character of a truly good Man at all Times, in all Places, and under every Dispensation. This is the Man, and this alone, to whom all the Promises of GOD's Word are made in general, and to whom that in the text belongs in particular.

I come now to consider the next thing I observed in the Words, *viz.*

II. The present state of good Men implied, *viz. Darknefs and Sorrow.*

Which is the Reverse of what is here promised them. The Promises of GOD's Word are all suitably adapted to the Circumstances and Necessities of his Servants.

Not

Nor can any thing be more suitable to them than the Promise of those things which they most want ; or of those Blessings which are most contrary to their present Calamities. So that by considering the particulars of that Happiness which God promises to confer upon them hereafter, we may learn the Circumstances of their destitute Condition now. Thus, for Instance, does he promise them Perfection and Strength ? we infer, that at present they are in a state of Imperfection and Weakness. Does he promise them hereafter Glory and Honour ? that implies that they are Strangers to these things now ; and must for a while be content to put up with Ignominy and Reproach. And does he (as in our Text) promise Light and Gladness ? we may infer then, that at present they are in a state of Darkness and Sorrow.

Thus you see the Propriety of that Inference upon which this second Observation is built ; which I come now more particularly to consider,

1. Then I say, that the state of good Men in this World is ordinarily a state of *Darkness*.

Their

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Their Light, indeed, will sometime here-
after *break forth as the Morning*. But they
must wait a while for it. During their pre-
sent state, they are in much Darknefs.

Darknefs denotes either Ignorance, or a
state of Doubts and Fears. In either Sense
it may be here applied.

1. Ignorance.

Alas! how little do the best and wisest
among us know of GOD, of *themselves*, of
things *present*, and things *future*? Some
may imagine they know a great deal, who
at the same time know nothing yet, *as they
ought to know*. A Conceit of Knowledge is
always a sign of great Ignorance and great
Pride united.

O, *who can by searching find out GOD!*
They, who by Contemplation, Faith, and
Prayer, and a diligent Study of the Works
and Ways, and Word of GOD, have happi-
ly attained the best Acquaintance with that
blessed Being, of any Creatures on Earth,
are most ready to confess after all, that it is
but *a small Portion they know of him*. *Clouds
and thick Darknefs are round about him*.
His Works and Ways, and Nature, are past
finding out. What can we think of his
Eternity?

Eternity? or a Being that never had a Beginning? Of his Immensity? or a Being that fills all Space? Of infinite Perfections? that is, all possible Perfections united in an infinite Degree? These are Things far beyond the reach of human Minds. Yet such a Being is the great GOD whom we worship; who *inhabits Eternity*, is every where present, and infinitely perfect. *He maketh Darkneſs his ſecret Place, his Pavilion round about him are dark Waters and thick Clouds of the Sky (a).*

And where is the Man who hath a juſt Knowledge of himſelf? I do not mean of his animal Frame; of the Texture and Organization of his Body, and Laws of Union by which the Fleſh and Spirit are tied together; of which it is certain the very wiſeſt among us know but very little; and which perhaps is one of the greateſt Myſteries in Nature; but how little does he know of his Soul? of it's Nature, Powers, Operations, Wants, Tendencies and Deſires? How many do evidently ſhew that they *know not what Spirit they are of?* who perhaps are grievouſly lamenting their Weakneſſes in
some

(a) Pſal. xviii. 11.

SERM. some particular respect, when their great
 IV. and most remarkable Failing lies quite another way ; of which they do not appear to be at all sensible.

Again, how little do we know of *present* Things? the Works of Nature, and the Ways of Providence? which soon nonplus all our Reasonings, and confound and humble our Understandings. Let us look upwards, or downwards, above us, or below us, or round about us, or within us, we see little else than Mysteries and Miracles, which we cannot comprehend or explain with any tolerable Degree of Satisfaction to our inquisitive Minds.

And, O, how much less do we know of things *future*! An impenetrable Vail intercepts the other World from our Eyes. We must cease to be mortal, before we can have any satisfying Knowledge of immortal Things. Our Souls are often glancing a wishful Eye into that other World to which they are going. Fain would we know what kind of state it is; how we shall think, and how we shall feel, when stript of these Bodies; and converse with none but pure Spirits, for ever removed from all corporeal and
 sen-

sensible Objects. But we cannot—with all the Light of Reason and Revelation, we cannot give our anxious and enquiring Minds any Satisfaction in these Points. It is Darkness, mere Conjecture all. God hath been pleased to hide these Things from us, to exercise our Hope and Trust in him, and our Faith in this important and general Truth, which he hath revealed to the highest Degree of Certainty, *viz.* that hereafter the Righteous shall be infinitely and for ever happy, and the Wicked extremely and for ever miserable. But as to the kind or manner of the Saints Happiness in the other World, as they know it will be something very different from any thing they ever enjoyed here, so they are forced to sit down contented with the Apostle *John's* Account of it, *We know not what we shall be (b).*

Lay all these things together now, and you will soon see reason to conclude, that the state of good men in this World is a state of Darkness, that is, of great Ignorance, especially if compared with the Light and Knowledge of the future state; when these Clouds shall be all dispersed; when the Eye

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of

(b) 1 John iii. 2.

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of the Soul shall be clarified and strengthened to see through the Mysteries which now confound it; when the Light of God's Countenance shall dispel our Darkness. *For in his Light we shall see Light.*

The Body is often called the Prison of the Soul. It may more properly be called it's Dungeon. As the Soul while it is joined to it, is not only in a state of Confinement, but Darkness. And in this dark and uncomfortable State it must abide, till Death comes and bursts open it's Prison Doors, and lets in the Light of the other World upon it.

But in the midst of all this Darkness, there are two things which good Men have reason to comfort themselves with the Thoughts of, viz. that the Darkness they are in is not *total* nor *perpetual*. — It is not *total*. Some Gleams of Light are let into their Dungeon. And it's enough, considering the present Weakness of their Sight. As their Faith strengthens, their Light shall increase. They have enough for their present Direction; though not enough to satisfy their Curiosity and Wish. And they should be thankful *they do not sit in Darkness,*

ness, and see no Light. — Besides, their Darknefs is not *perpetual*. This glimmering Dawn will soon break out into open Day. And their Light is now increasing; though it may be perhaps by imperceptible Degrees; like the tender Blade that rises from the Seed. *For Light is sown for the righteous.* But,

2. Darknefs further denotes a state of Doubts and Fears.

And such very often is the state of good Men in this Life; and this indeed is but the natural Consequence of their Ignorance. Through their unacquaintedness with God, and themselves, the state of their Souls, and their fitness for Heaven, their minds are often troubled with Jealousies and suspicious Fears, lest they should finally fall short of the Happiness they hope for, by their not being qualified for it in the manner they ought to be. And these Fears are often greatly aggravated by the lively sense they have of the Pollution and Guiltiness of their own natures, and the perfect Purity and Holiness of the divine, to which all Sin is infinitely opposite and odious. Indeed the Revelation of the Riches of divine Grace, and

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the infinite Merits of the Redeemer's Blood was designed to counterbalance those Fears, and give the minds of Christians a firm and stedfast Hope. But their Faith is often so weak, and their Knowledge so low, that they cannot derive that Comfort and Stability of soul from this Thought which they might and ought. They are apt to fear, lest their Reliance on the Mercy of God, and the Merits of Christ, should be Presumption. Were they but sure they had a Warrant to lay hold of this Hope; might they be so happy as to see their Interest in Christ, and Fitness for his Salvation, they should be satisfied; they could then comfortably and calmly depend on his Atonement, and hope for Salvation through his Blood. But this is what they want to see. And their Uncertainty in this point is that which fills them with so much Fear. For they know that it is not a Man's saying that he depends intirely on Christ, that amounts to a saving Faith in him; because he himself hath declared, that there are many who claim a Relation to him, and profess a Dependence upon him now, that will be disowned by him hereafter as *Workers of Iniquity* (c). What they are

(c) Mat. vii. 23.

are most concerned about, is their Qualification for the Happiness promised to true Christians; which consists in the Sincerity of their Repentance, Faith, and Holiness. And as it is this they have their Scruples about, hence arise their Fears. Were they but sure of their Sincerity, and of the real Conversion of their Souls to GOD, they should be easy, and could gladly confide in the Merits of Christ, and the Mercy of GOD, in the darkest Day. “ But so much Imperfection, — so many wilful Sins, both of Omission and Commission, — so long continued in, — so often repeated, — and so superficially repented of!” — How can all this be consistent with Sincerity? And without Sincerity there can be no warrantable Hope of Salvation, or Trust in Christ. Without this, that which some call Faith, is mere Delusion. And they are afraid of this fatal Self-deception. — And hence they live Strangers to heavenly Hope and inward Peace, and Slaves to anxious Doubts and distressing Fears.

And yet such a Christian may be truly sincere, though he does not know it; and may have a Right to more Comfort, than

SERM. he will allow himself to partake of. And
 IV. I am inclined to think, that there is no truly
 serious and conscientious Soul, however pious and sincere, that is entirely free from all such kind of Suspensions at certain times. Hardened Hypocrites and stupid profane Sinners may; but that is owing to their Insensibility, or want of Thought; which serves them a while instead of solid Hope. But it is a better sign, and shews a truer sense of things, to be rather too diffident, than too confident.

It would be foreign to my present Purpose to stay to offer particular Topics of Relief and Consolation to such doubting and dejected Christians; and which, after all, perhaps, they would not be persuaded to apply. I shall therefore only say, let such self-diffident Christians but take care, that their Conscientiousness and Fidelity in all known Duty keep pace with their Hope in God, and Trust in Christ, and that Hope and Trust will never deceive them; nor can they take too much Comfort from it. This Advice you have in those words, *Isai. l. 10.* which seem particularly adapted and directed to good People of this Complexion, *Who*

of the Righteous.

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is there among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the Voice of his Servant, that walketh in Darknes, and hath no Light? Let him trust in the Name of the Lord, and stay upon his GOD.

SERN.

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2. Another thing implied in the Words is, that the present state is to good Men usually a state of Sorrow.

This stands in opposition to that Gladness which is promised them in the Text. As their present Darknes does to their future Light.

Indeed Gladness is *sown* for them, as well as Light. But they must wait for it. They find but very little of it at present. As for Joy and Gladness, we must look for it among Persons of a very different Cast and Character. The gay and vain part of the World, who generally discover the greatest Ignorance of GOD, and Neglect of Religion, commonly share the greatest part of the Pleasures and Delights of Life among them. As to good and upright Men, Oppression, Persecution, and Hardship commonly fall to their Share; and what from the World, and what from themselves, and from Satan the great Disturber of their Peace, they

SERM. have often Sorrow upon Sorrow. So that if
IV. they had no Views beyond the Grave, if their
Hopes terminated in this Life, they would be
of all Men the most miserable.

And indeed this inward state of their Minds is but suitable to their outward State and Condition in Life. There cannot be much Gladness, where there is so much Darkness. Their Ignorance and Doubts will create them much Sorrow and Trouble. A Prison, or a Dungeon, is but an unfit Place for Joy and Pleasure. Not that it is always or altogether impossible to find it there. The Pleasures of a good Conscience, and the Satisfaction of the divine Presence, may follow a Man into the darkest Distress, and be his Support under the worst Calamity. For we are not to suppose, that the Righteous and Upright Man is altogether without his Joy. No, the Peace of a good Conscience, and a contented Mind, the solid Comforts of God's Presence, and the inward Satisfaction that arises from his future Prospects, stick by him still. Which render the *Ways of Wisdom*, upon the whole, *Ways of Pleasantness and Peace*, and afford him sufficient Support under all his Sorrow.

But

But yet his outward Condition is for the most part full of Trouble, of one kind or other. For he not only meets with the common Calamities of Life which Mortality is Heir to, but his Fidelity to God and Conscience, and the deep sense he hath of his many guilty Defects and Errors, often create him many outward Troubles and secret Sorrows which others are Strangers to.

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Well, such then is ordinarily the state of the Righteous and Upright in this World. A state of *Darkness* and *Sorrow*. Which renders the Promise in the text peculiarly suitable to them. As it assures them that things will soon alter for the better; that whatever they *reap* in this World, *Light* and *Gladness* is *sown* for them in the other.

Which leads me to consider the next Observation I made upon the Words, *viz.*

III. The Happiness of the Righteous and Upright Man's State in the other World, expressed in the text by *Light* and *Gladness*.

I shall consider each of these Characters distinctly.

I. Heaven is a state of *LIGHT*.

And

SERM. And as Darkness implies a state of Ignorance and Doubt; so Light implies a state of Knowledge and Assurance.

IV.

1. When the Righteous are admitted into the heavenly World their Knowledge shall be greatly increased.

In order to give you a more distinct View of this part of their Felicity, I would observe,

1. That their intellectual Powers will then be very much strengthened and enlarged.

The Body is a great Clog upon the present Operations of the Soul. Fleshly Appetites and Incumbrances blunt the edge of the Mind, and obstruct the proper exercise of it's Faculties. But when this Clog and Load of Flesh is taken off, the Soul will exert itself with an unknown Freedom and Vigour. It's Capacities will have room to expand and exercise themselves without Obstruction. And not only so, but those very Faculties will be *increased*. And by continual Exercise will be continually increasing; till they grasp in unknown degrees of new and surprising Knowledge, which will elevate and ennoble the Soul, and dispose it to the most ardent Adoration of the infinite and all-wise Creator.

2. The

2. The Faculties of the Soul will then not only be disincumbered and enlarged, but a great Variety of new and unthought of Objects will be continually offering themselves. SERM.
IV.

While we are in the present low and contracted State, things run pretty much in a Circle. The same scenes come over and over again, and in a few Years all their Variety is exhausted; insomuch, that *Solomon* says, *There is no new thing under the Sun* (c). And this is what makes the present World so tedious a state to a Mind enriched with sublime Sentiments, and panting with a Thirst of Knowledge. But the Objects that will present themselves to our View in the other World, will not only be more noble and more suitable for the Exercise and Contemplation of an immortal Spirit, but will be always new, and therefore always delightful and entertaining. Many things shall we then undoubtedly see and know, of which we now form no Ideas at all. And our Acquaintance with Objects, Scenes, and Beings, perfectly new and unthought of, in that World of Light, will not a little augment our Wonder and Felicity.

3. We

(c) Eccles. i. 9.

SERM.

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3. We shall then have a much more plain and perfect Conception of those things which we now think we do know.

I mean of those things which are worth knowing. For as for a good deal of our present Knowledge, *i. e.* that which is only subservient to the Amusements, the Pleasures and Profits of this World, it will then vanish as altogether useless. And if the Saints in Heaven are capable of blushing, they will be ashamed to think that they spent so much time and pains in the Acquisition of such false and unprofitable Knowledge. But as to those things which it becomes us to know, and the Knowledge of which will add to the Perfection and Happiness of the Mind, those things we shall certainly know in a much more perfect Manner than we do, or can do now,

The Apostle represents this in a very elegant and striking Manner, when he tells us that we now see *but through a glass darkly*; (we have but a faint glimmering, confused view of things; such as we have of very distant Objects through a Telescope) *but then we shall see face to face (d)*. Our Knowledge

(d) 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

ledge of heavenly and divine Things will then be as much more distinct, clear, and perfect than it is now, as our Sight of Objects close at hand is, than the view we take of them at a Distance through a Glass.

4. I would further observe, that the Facility with which this Knowledge shall be acquired will add not a little to the Pleasure of the Acquisition.

In the present dark and confined state of the human Faculties, we are forced to study hard and take great Pains to attain a small Portion of useful and substantial Knowledge. And after all we may lose our Labour; and take up with false Knowledge instead of true. But what we then shall know, we shall not only know infallibly, but in a good measure intuitively, or by immediate Communication. The surest and easiest Way of attaining a true Insight into any Branch of Science now is, by Sight, or by a free Converse with those who have a perfect Knowledge of the Subject we would be acquainted with, and a clear and easy way of communicating that Knowledge. In this delightful and expeditious way will most of our Knowledge hereafter be attained. A
good

SERM. good deal of it will be intuitive. We shall
 IV. then see what we now can but guess at; and
 clearly behold those things which with the
 utmost Efforts and Attention of our reasoning
 Powers we can at present but very imperfectly
 apprehend. And then the Angels, those glorious and
 benevolent Creatures, and the other celestial and
 perfect Spirits, with whom we shall freely converse,
 will very gladly communicate to us much of the
 Knowledge we want, and which they who have
 been so long the Inhabitants of that blessed
 World will have in a much greater Degree,
 than we at our first Entrance into it can be
 supposed to have.

And, *Lastly*, Let me add, that our Knowledge
 then will be perpetually progressive; or for ever
 increasing.

This is what cannot be said of our Knowledge
 at present. There is often such a Mixture of
 Error in it, that as our Faculties improve, and
 our Judgments ripen, we see a Necessity to
 unlearn a great deal of what we before learned;
 to take pains to divest ourselves of those
 Prejudices which led us into Mistakes; to
 retract our Steps, to go back the wrong way
 we have rambled into, in order

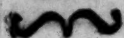
der to make any progress in the right. Or if this should not happen to be the Case, our Knowledge will soon be at a stand. The Faculties of the Mind will grow dull and feeble through Age and Infirmities, and be able to retain but little, if any, of that Knowledge which it once took so much Pains to acquire.

But not so in that world of Light and Perfection to which the pious Soul aspires. There it will not only retain the Knowledge it gains, but will be continually increasing it. The Progress it shall make in the most substantial and felicitating Knowledge shall not only be most expeditious and delightful, but uninterrupted and perpetual. For ever growing!

And here indeed the Metaphor in the text fails us; and we easily see the Defect. The dawning Light which rises out of Darkness is sweetly progressive to a certain Degree, after which it proceeds no farther. It can rise no higher than the meridian Lustre, or the brightness of Noon, and then gradually decays. But the Knowledge of the Saints in Heaven, which is compared to it, is for ever growing; and will never know a point

SERM.

IV.



point beyond which it cannot pass. After Millions of Ages spent in those happy Regions of Light and Pleasure, there will still be new Objects of Knowledge arising to entertain and ravish the inquisitive Soul; with which, notwithstanding the full Draughts of it already imbibed, it will never be satiated. Because it's Faculties to retain the Knowledge it has, and to acquire more, will be proportionably strengthened; so as to give the Soul a constant fresh Entertainment. And to be thus speedily and eternally advancing in the most delightful Knowledge,—O, how perfect, how happy must such a Spirit be! Let us think of this, and be humbled for our present Ignorance.

Thus have I endeavoured to strike out a short Sketch of that *Light which is sown for the Righteous*; as that implies their future Knowledge. But,

2. I would just observe, that as Darknēss not only implies Ignorance but Doubtfulness, and Uncertainty, so Light implies not only Knowledge but Stability and Assurance.

“And O, thou righteous Soul, consider how
 “well established then will thy Felicity be!
 “All thy Difficulties and Dejections, thy
 “Jealou-

“ Jealousies and Surmises relating to the state
“ of thy Soul, or any future Evil apprehend-
“ ed, will be vanished and gone for ever ;
“ and thou shalt never know the Distress of
“ a doubtful Thought more. Thou shalt
“ then have a most full and assured sense of
“ the reality of thy Love to G O D, and of
“ thine interest in his ; because thou wilt be
“ for ever feasting on the happy Fruits of it.
“ Never more will G O D hide his Face from
“ thee ; but the Light of his Countenance
“ will be thine incessant Joy.”

And if we but consider into what Distress and Anxiety of Soul, the Christian's Doubts and Fears, concerning his everlasting state, sometimes throw him, we cannot look upon this infallible Assurance, that his Salvation is for ever secure, as the smallest part of his Happiness. Angels indeed once fell from their heavenly Dignity ; but the glorified Saints never shall. Because they shall meet with no Temptations to Sin ; their time of Trial is over, their State confirmed, and their Happiness is always in Scripture said to be everlasting.

But not to insist longer upon this, I shall conclude my Description of that *Light which*

The future Happiness

SERM.
IV.

is sown for the Righteous, with those Words of the Apostle John, Rev. xxi. 22,—27. And I saw no Temple therein; for the Lord GOD almighty, and the Lamb, are the Temple of it. And the City had no need of the Sun, neither of the Moon to shine in it; for the Glory of GOD did lighten it, and the Lamb is the LIGHT thereof. And the Nations of them which are saved, shall walk in the LIGHT of it; and the Kings of the Earth do bring their Glory and Honour into it. And the Gates of it shall not be shut at all by Day; for there shall be no Night there. And they shall bring the Glory and Honour of the Nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh Abomination, or maketh a Lye; but they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

I should now proceed to consider the next Branch of the Saint's future Felicity comprehended in the text, under the word *Gladness*. *Light is sown for the Righteous, and GLADNESS for the Upright in Heart.* But this must be the Subject of the ensuing Discourse.

To

of the Righteous.

III

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IV.

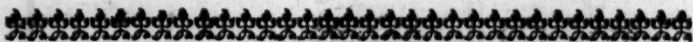


To conclude, let those of us who have good Hope through Grace, that we are Heirs of this Light, take care to walk as *Children of Light*. — Let us bear our present Darkneſs with Patience. For our Light will ſoon *break forth as the Morning*. Death, that King of Terrors, will tranſmit us into immortal Joys, and the Valley of Darkneſs leads to eternal Light. Why then ſhould we fear that which will for ever free us from all our Fears? — Through all our preſent Darkneſs we have now been endeavouring to look into the Light of the upper World. And the ſhort View we have had of it, though very defective and confuſed, is enough to make us humble and aſtoniſhed at our Ignorance; and more aſtoniſhed that any, ſuch poor ignorant Creatures as we are, ſhould ever be proud of their Knowledge! than which nothing diſcovers a more miſerable Diſtance from true Knowledge. — But let us bleſs God for that little Light we have, and for that greater we hope for; and make it our conſtant Care to perſevere in the way to, and be more and more prepared for, that happy World of Light and Immortality!



S E R M O N V.

The future HAPPINESS of the
R I G H T E O U S.



P S A L M xcvii. II.

*Light is sown for the Righteous;
and Gladness for the Upright in
Heart.*



IN these Words the following
things are to be observed.

I. The Character that is here
given of good Men. They are *Righ-
teous and Upright.*

II. Their present state implied. *Dark-
ness and Sorrow.*

III Their

III. Their future Happiness expressed. SERM.

Light and Gladness.

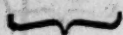
V.

Lastly, The Metaphor under which this is described. *Light is sown for the Righteous.*

The two first of these have been considered in a former Discourse; when I made an Entrance upon the third, *viz.* the Consideration of the future Happiness of the Righteous, as here expressed by *Light and Gladness*. Under the former of these Representations I have already considered it. I come now,

2. To illustrate the other Branch of the Saint's Blessedness in Heaven denoted by the Word *Gladness*.

A Thing to which good Men are often great Strangers whilst they are here. And indeed they are intire Strangers to that complete unmixed Joy, that full and satisfying *Gladness*, which is implied in this Promise. There is no such thing to be found in this World. The Sensualist and Worldling drink of muddy Streams. Their Draughts of Pleasure are polluted; and create but a more vehement Thirst. And there is so much Worm-

SERM.
V.

The pleasures of Sense are pleasures tho short transient & unsatisfactory. & can't be compar'd wth those of virtue. Tho' no angling man out of their Senses. w^{ch} are the gratification. the only thing is to persuade us to seek after the more exalted refin'd & stable pleasures of society the favor of God & a good conscience. & unite them in one and mixt of life & of virtue together.

wood in their Cups of Pleasure, as renders them nauseous to persons of a refined Taste. And even the innocent Diversions and Delights of Life are so dry and transient, so unsatisfying when present, and so useless when past, that a wise Man sees no reason to be very fond of them. And a frequent Repetition quite exhausts them. Nay, further, the very pleasures of the Understanding, and even those of Devotion itself, are so interrupted and incomplete, so rare and unconstant, so hard to be attained and retained, that they seldom leave the Mind the Satisfaction it desires. They are indeed much more solid and substantial than any other kind of Pleasures we know; yet there is a sensible Deficiency in them: and we want, what we can never have here, a full and durable Enjoyment of them. And, O! what long Intervals of Perplexity and Pain often come between these little lucid Moments of Pleasure!

In short, when we speak of pure and perfect Joy, of complete and uninterrupted Pleasure, we speak of a thing we know nothing of; because it is what we have been ever Strangers to. We can form no better Idea

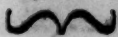
of

of the Righteous.

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V.



of it than the blind Man with his half-recovered Sight did of external Objects, when he saw *Men as Trees walking*. But most satisfying and complete will be the Joy of Heaven, which in the text is promised to the *Upright in Heart*. *I shall be satisfied, when I awake in thy Likeness (a)*. *In thy Presence is Fulness of Joy (b)*.

Vain then may it be thought for us to attempt a Description of what we confess we do not know. But we may, and ought to contemplate so much of it as we do know. And such properties of it hath God been pleased to discover to us in his Word, as may give the Mind a most sweet and noble Entertainment in the Contemplation of them. And the better to direct and assist your Thoughts on this elevated Subject, I propose,

I. To lay before you some of the chief Properties of that Joy and Gladness, which is promised to the Saints in Heaven.

II. Shew you the various Sources of it, or from whence it flows.

H 4

I. I shall

(a) Psal. xvii. 15.

(b) Psal. xvi. 11.

I. I shall lay before you some of the chief Properties of that Joy and Gladness which is prepared for the Saints in Heaven. And,

1. To begin with the lowest, it will be a total Freedom from every kind of Pain and Uneasiness.

This is what Men rarely find in this World. They may indeed by means of Recreation and Diversion beguile the sense of Pain a while, or by Opiates stupify it, but it soon returns with augmented Force; and sometimes to such an unsupportable degree that *their Souls chuse Strangling and Death rather than Life*. O, wretched State! to be willing to fly to Delirium and Death, as a Refuge from Pain!

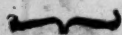
But, in Heaven, though the Faculties of the Soul shall be refined to the most exquisite Degree of Sensibility, it will be a perfect Stranger to every thing that can give it the least Disquietude. This will evidently appear, if we examine the several Sources of Pain. For all our Pain and Uneasiness now arises either from the bad state of the Body or Mind, or from the Disappointments of
the

the World, or the Sins and Follies of other Men. But all these Causes of Pain will be then removed.—The Spirit shall no more suffer from the Infirmities of the Flesh. For the Body to which it will be reunited shall be gloriously refined, and incapable of Disorder or Defect.—The Appetites and Passions of the Mind will be no more the source of Pain; because there will be nothing in Heaven to tempt them to an irregular Excess, or draw them towards a forbidden Object.—And this World and all the Wickedness of Men we shall be for ever removed from; and therefore shall never be capable of suffering any more from them.—In short, there will be no Sin in Heaven, and therefore no Sorrow there. For when the Cause is removed the Effect will cease.

And is there not *Gladness* in this Thought?
—Sin is the righteous Soul's greatest Burden. He mourns over it more than over those Afflictions which he suffers as the Fruit of it. But into the *new Jerusalem* there shall *in no wise enter any thing that defileth*, Rev. xxi. 27. Then the Sin which now so easily besets us, and costs us so much
Pains

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V.



Pains to watch and strive against, and which with all our Pains we cannot entirely subdue, nay can scarce keep ourselves from being conquered by it; this shall then tempt and grieve us no more. Death will make our Conquest over it complete; and by destroying this Body of Sin it will be the Destruction of Sin itself. But,

2. To rise a Step higher, in Heaven there will not only be a perfect Freedom from all Pain, but an Enjoyment of the most solid and satisfying Pleasure.

Which (as I observed before) is what we are now quite unacquainted with. Our sweetest Cup hath some bitter Ingredient. Inasmuch that *Solomon* tells us (and no man understood human Nature better) that sometimes *in the midst of Laughter the Heart is sorrowful*, Prov. xiv. 13. Here our

Roses grow on Thorns,

And Honey wears a Sting. *Watts.*

But in Heaven there is unmix'd delight; no hidden Gall in the Cup, no inward Pang amidst the outward Pleasure. But the glorified Saint shall possess the sincerest Satisfaction; shall drink at the Fountain Head; and

and no longer at the distant Streams it did before, which were not only very shallow, but oftentimes very muddy.

SERM.

V.

3. The Saint's Pleasures in Heaven shall be constant and uninterrupted.

The low Pleasures of this Life are not only very unsatisfying, but very rare and uncertain. It is but now and then our Seasons of Gladness return. And how soon are they interrupted with sudden returns of Sorrow! — And indeed were the Pleasures of Sense to become constant, they would become irksome. A short Enjoyment kills them, and rishes all their Sweets. They must be discontinued to keep up the Relish of them. And this Property, which invariably belongs to them all, sufficiently shews their Emptiness.

Let us
also
the rich
the great
the Power
able to be
in their
own opin
ion Rap
idly. Let
us pour
out all
their
Retic

But the Pleasures of Heaven are so substantial and pure that they will bear a perpetual Enjoyment. Every Interruption or Intermision of them would be a real Unhappiness; and therefore it is certain there can be no such thing. Nor will the constant Enjoyment of them create in us that Satiety which arises from the perpetual Fruition of earthly Delights, which takes off

in favour
of earthly
bliss: let
us say
these
could
be our
are as
much

strangers to their delights as they are to the celebrated pleasures of Religion. I say not all their Happiness must fall in a delug short of the joy above. as Heaven is above the earth the perfection of souls body & celly body in the highest enjoyment. 1767

we must say the poor man is happiest Re-
 & that further as it considers the innocent pleasure
 of life in a right view of view as frail & so
 expects no more from ^{the} than they can give ^{any}
 I 20 *The future Happiness*
 in ^{the} ^{best} ^{good}

SERM. the Relish of them; for though the Plea-

V. sures of Heaven will be so full and satisfying

that we shall be sensible of no Defect in
 them, yet they are so pure and solid that they
 will appear ever new; and our Faculties will
 be so strengthened, refined and exalted, that
 they will never be weary of taking them in.
 There will be no need of an Abstinence
 from them to create an Appetite for them.
 The Purity of them would supply the place
 of Variety, were the Soul to be for ever feast-
 ing on the same Pleasures. But this will not
 be the Case. For,

4. Their Variety will be equal to their
 Purity.

This is another thing that will contribute
 to the Gladness of the glorified Saints in
 Heaven, of which we can form but a very
 low Idea whilst we are on Earth. For our
 pleasures here are not only very superficial
 and scanty, but so few in their kind (at
 least those of them which any one Man is
 capable of possessing; for it is impossible for
 one Man in any state whatever to enjoy all
 the pleasures of Life. I say they are so few)
 that they are soon drained dry, and all their
 Sweets exhausted.

Indeed

and dis-
 appoint for
 being im-
 perfect &
 short-lived
 will calm
 & still well
 please. is
 Epicure
 want to
 reason to
 temper the
 impetuosity
 of life, even
 to render
 our lives
 enjoyable
 which such
 as they are
 only capable
 of a design
 by the God
 of nature
 a providence
 in this
 exuberant
 bounty.

Indeed could a Man, when he had drained out one kind of Pleasure, be immediately supplied with another as suitable to his taste; and were his natural Strength and Capacities to continue always firm, and his taste for earthly Delights always the same; he would then have some reason to be fond of this World, and would meet with something like a Happiness in it. But, alas! this is not the Case; his natural Powers and Capacities are failing him, and his very Relish for most of the pleasures of Life is decaying. But if they were not, he is tied down to such a tedious Round of the same kind of Pleasures, that the Repetition of them grows dull. It is Variety only that keeps up their taste; but there are so few of them in our Reach, that *that* Variety cannot be had; and if a Man will have them he must have the same over again which he enjoyed before, and that without half their former Relish.

But infinitely different now from this is the property of heavenly Delights. Their Variety will be equal to their Purity. Were they to continue the same they would be ever satisfying, for the reasons before alledged; but they will

SERM. will not only be most pure, but so various
 V. that the Novelty will be continually adding
 to the pleasure of the Enjoyment. The new
 scenes of Knowledge which will be then
 opening to our Minds, I have before observ-
 ed, will be unspeakably astonishing to our
 Souls; and I may add, the new scenes of
 Pleasure that will be continually opening to
 our View will unmeasurably enhance our
 Felicity. New and unthought of Objects
 of Delight; new and strengthened Faculties
 to enjoy them! For the Faculties will not
 then be languid and feeble as they are now;
 nor Pleasures run in the same perpetual
 Round they do now; but the one will be
 ever fresh, and the other ever new. For the
 infinite Fulness of the Deity will supply the
 Soul that enjoys him with pleasures of ever-
 lasting Novelty. And it will not only en-
 joy what it never did here on Earth, but
 what it never once imagined itself capable of
 enjoying.

5. The Happiness of the Saints in Heaven
 will be an unenvied Happiness.

A small degree of Eminence in this World,
 nay, a fancied Superiority may sometimes
 make a Man the object of Envy, Detraction,
 and

and Obloquy. Not that Envy itself at all hurts the Person that is the Object of it; unless it break out (as indeed it too often does) into ill Words and ill Actions. For it is a Viper, which, though it may hiss at others, yet always turns it's Sting in upon itself. However, when it rises to a great degree, it may occasion Inconveniencies, to the considerable Diminution of the Comfort of those against whom it is directed.

But there shall be no such Abatements to the Felicity of the heavenly Saints; who shall ever shine with unenvied Lustre. Envy, Malice, and Malignity, the Brood of Hell, shall hereafter be confined to those Regions of Darkness and Horror, from whence they sprung, and can have no Entrance into that Land of Light and Gladness, where perfect Love and Joy, and Peace, for ever reign.

That there will be degrees of Happiness in Heaven, is a point, I think, that cannot reasonably be disputed. But the higher degrees of Glory which some will then enjoy above others will be so far from raising a Spirit of Envy in the latter, that it will rather be an Augmentation of their Felicity.

each others happiness all alone. They Rejoice in one
Soul. each sharing in the others bliss. the highest
Angel in the meanest Saint. & God delighting
in all. rejoicing over us in everlasting joy.
we never cease in all the superior excellency
of the saints & the more we have in light we are

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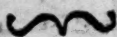
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They will rejoice in the superior Happiness of their Fellow-saints, and partake of it themselves.

This, perhaps, may seem strange to us now, because we see so little of it here on Earth. But it will, it must be the Case hereafter ; and we shall be fully satisfied of it if we consider——How perfectly every one will then be brought to acquiesce in the righteous Awards of the final Judgment ; when *every one shall receive according to his Works*——How impossible it will be for even the meanest Saint in Heaven to be obscured or eclipsed by the superior Lustre of another——How safe he is from being trampled upon, or despised by those of superior Rank ; as the mean ones often are by the great ones of this World : which is often the chief cause of Envy——How infinitely small the Disproportion will be between the meanest and the highest Saint, nay, the highest Angel, in Heaven, in comparison of the ineffable Glories of the great Redeemer and the ever blessed GOD, which will be always before their Eyes, and infinitely eclipse and transcend them all——and, lastly, how sincere and ardent will be the Love, Friendship, and Bene-

Benevolence which they will all have for one another. — These things considered, I say, it will appear impossible that the superiority of the highest Saint in Heaven should excite the least degree of Jealousy or Envy in the lowest; but will rather be an Addition to his Happiness.

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V.
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And, blessed be God! degenerate as our World is, we have something of this lovely Spirit still left amongst us; nor are there wanting Instances of such entire Friendship, as disposes a Man to be as well pleased with the Happiness that befalls his Friend, as if it fell to his own Share; and he enjoys himself the better for it.

Lastly, To crown all, this Joy will be everlasting.

It will never know a Period, because it will be *the Joy of the Lord* (c); and therefore will be as perpetual as the Fountain from whence it flows, that is, everlasting. There will be no fear either of an Interruption, or a Period of it.

The Death of all our earthly Joys is, that we must soon part with them. This blasts the Miser's Hope; throws a Damp on

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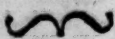
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all

(c) Mat. xxv. 21.

SERM.

V.



all the ambitious Man's Wishes; and chills the ardent Desires of the Voluptuary. That Thought, that *this Night their Souls may be required of them*, strikes Thunder into their Hearts; and would make them cry out *Vanity of Vanities!* were they not themselves infatuated with that Vanity.

But no such Worm lies at the root of the Tree of Life, which blossoms in eternal Spring. Indeed the Thought itself would be intolerable. The very Possibility of being ever brought down from such a Height of Happiness, or the very Apprehension of it's ever coming to an end, would be a Thought they could not bear (*d*). But their Happiness is made sure for ever by an immutable Decree stamp'd with the Seal of Heaven.

And O, what *Gladness* will ever spring from this Thought! so full of Rapture! which can only be heightened by this additional Consideration, "that this Happiness" which the blessed Saint is possessed of, "will

(*d*) O, ye blest'd Realms of permanent Delight!  
 Full above Measure, lasting beyond Bound!  
 Could you, so rich in Rapture, fear an End,  
 That ghastly Thought would drink up all you Joy;  
 And quite unparadise the Realms of Light. *Young.*

“ will not only be for ever, but be for ever growing.” The longer it continues, the greater will it be; and will be thus expanding and increasing through all the Ages of Eternity. O, the immense Height then to which it will attain some Millions of Ages hence! Shall not this Thought fire all our Ambition? O, what a Bubble, what a mere Vanity is all the Happiness of this World put together, were it ten thousand times greater than it really is, in comparison of those Ideas which we are now able to form of the Happiness of the Saints in Heaven! And yet after all, our highest Ideas and Conceptions of it fall infinitely short of the Reality. With great Reason will the happy Souls say, when they enter on the scene of such consummate Joy, what the Queen of *Sheba* said of the Magnificence of *Solomon's* Court, that *the half had not been told* them. It hath never yet *entered into their Hearts*, the Scripture saith; and it never will, *till they are absent from the Body*. They may live and guess, but they must dye to know.

Thus have I endeavoured to assist your Thoughts in the Contemplation of that Gladness which is *sown for the Upright in*  
1 2
Heart;



SERM.

V.

Heart; that *Fulness of Joy* which they shall possess at God's *right Hand for evermore*; by setting before you some of the essential and most obvious Properties of it.

But we must not part with so delightful a Theme so soon. Let us keep our Thoughts then intent upon it a little longer, whilst we examine,

II. The source of all this Happiness, or whence it flows

It is something to which we are such perfect Strangers here on Earth, that even this faint, defective Representation which hath now been given of it, appears almost incredible; and we are tempted to look upon it more as Flourish than Fact. It is fit then it should be demonstrated, and made plain to your Reason and Understanding, that it cannot possibly be otherwise; by considering more particularly the alteration which Death will make in a good Man's State, and how many things will contribute to heighten his Happiness afterwards.

I. Then, one thing which to be sure will greatly contribute to this unspeakable degree of Gladness and Felicity which the righteous

teous shall enjoy in Heaven, is their eternal  
Release and *Freedom from a Body of Sin and*  
*Death.*

SERM,  
V.

This Body, which we are so fond of, and so tenderly indulge, is the seat and source of most of the Maladies we now suffer; as appears from the many Pains, Temptations, and Sins to which it exposes us: But when we are once happily stript of this, we shall be for ever free from the Uneasiness and Trouble it now creates us; and *the Flesh will no longer lust against the Spirit, nor the Spirit against the Flesh*, as it now does.

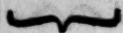
We know not indeed what it is to subsist without a Body; but that we may live more happily without it, than with it, is certain, however strange it may appear to us now. A Man must be almost all Body to think otherwise. The Soul is certainly debased and imprisoned, whilst it is thus cramped up in Flesh; it is then ennobled and enlarged when it is got free from it.

2. The natural Faculties and Powers of the Soul will be then strengthened and preserved in their full Vigour and Exercise.

These at present are but feeble and confined at best; and, after a maturity of Age,

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are continually growing weaker and weaker. Or, to speak more properly, are continually more and more obstructed in their Operations through the Weakness of those bodily Organs by which they act. For the rational and intellectual Powers of the Soul, I suppose, retain the same Vigour in themselves, but are not so capable of exerting themselves, by reason of the growing Imbecility and Decay of the animal Powers, and the Body to which it is confined. But in Heaven, not only these Fetters of Flesh shall be taken off, and all the Impediments of Mortality be done away, but all the natural Powers of the Soul shall be strengthened and enlarged, to take in a more comprehensive View and Knowledge of things, in order to it's growing Happiness.

3. Not only the natural, but the moral Powers of the Mind will then be in a state of Perfection, and every Grace and Virtue be complete.

Perfection of Grace is what with all our Helps we can now never attain; but then we shall. And this for certain will make a great part of our Happiness then. So true is that common Observation, "that Grace

" is



“ is Glory begun, and Glory is Grace completed.” Then shall we be made perfect in Love, in Holiness, in Zeal, in Knowledge, in Devotion; and shall never complain of Sin, or Coldness, or Corruption more. In Heaven there will be nothing to interrupt our devout Converse with GOD, or check the most ardent Efforts of our Souls to praise him. Our Doubts, and Darkness, and Dulness, will all be gone, and we shall be (what we now so often in vain wish to be) all Life and Spirit and Fervour in the Contemplation of the divine Love and Excellence. Nor will the cold Fit ever return, or the Devotion ever flag. For it is only owing to the Weakness of the natural Faculties, or the moral powers of the Soul, and the Imperfection of our present Attainments in Grace, that it does so now. But we shall then be (*ἰσχυροὶ*) *like to the Angels in Heaven, Mark xii. 25.* for the Power and Purity of our Devotion, which we are unhappily such Strangers to now, through the prevalence of Sense and Sin.

4. Much of our Happiness will arise from the Survey of the glorious Objects which will all around open to our intellectual

SERM. View; and which we shall see, if not with  
 V. bodily Eyes, yet with as clear and satisfying  
 a Perception as that conveyed by the Organs  
 of Sense.

But we can but guess *now* at the celestial  
 Glories which will, with unmeasurable De-  
 light, strike our ravished Souls *then*. The  
 Ideas of Light, Beauty, Order, and Harmony  
 convey but a poor Image of them to our  
 Minds. Only in general we may be sure  
 that nothing that is pleasing and delightful  
 will be wanting in the Palace of the King  
 of Heaven for the Entertainment of his  
 Guests, whom he hath invited and conduct-  
 ed thither.

5. Our perpetual Advances in Knowledge  
 will be the perpetual Increase of our Hap-  
 piness.

What the former will be, I have endea-  
 voured to represent to you in my first Dis-  
 course from these Words. And if we but  
 consider that this is the proper Happiness  
 of a rational and intelligent Being, we must  
 be sensible that this will open to us one of  
 the chief sources of our Felicity; especially  
 if we consider the Nature of that Know-  
 ledge in which we shall be continually im-  
 proving,

proving, it's Suitableness to the Desires and Capacities of the Soul, and the easy and expeditious method by which it will be acquired; all which I have already endeavour'd to illustrate; and therefore shall dwell no longer upon them now; and only mention it here as one very considerable Source from which the Saint's Happiness will hereafter flow.

6. Joy shall spring up in their Souls from the immediate, free, and uninterrupted Efflux and Communication of it from God himself; whose Smiles shall inspire them with heavenly Gladness, and fill them with Satisfaction unutterable.

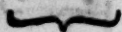
That which we call here the gracious Presence of God, and Joy in the Holy Ghost, though it may bear a Resemblance to, yet is but a feeble Image of that Pleasure which his nearest Presence, and the freest Manifestations of his Love afford. And though it be something we cannot describe, yet it is something we cannot doubt of if we consider, that it is the Fruition of the ever blessed God that creates it, *in whose Presence is Fullness of Joy.*

*Lastly,*



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*Lastly*, If to this we add the Society to which the glorified Saints will be admitted, we have then all the principal Sources of their Happiness in Heaven.

1. We shall then be intimately acquainted with all those good and virtuous Men who are gone long before us to that happy World; whose Memories are preserved, and whose Praises are recorded in sacred and other Histories; whom we have often heard, and often talked of; whose Characters we admire, whose Names we revere, and whose Virtues we are trying to imitate; and who, by the same *Faith and Patience*, which we are now called to the Exercise of, *are inheriting the Promises*.

2. Our dear pious Friends and Relatives, whom we loved, and with so much Pain parted from on Earth, we shall meet again; meet never to know the Pain of parting more; meet, and know, and enjoy them, to unspeakable Advantage; strip'd of all those little Imperfections which were a considerable Abatement to the Happiness we enjoyed in their Society on Earth.—And there, perhaps, we may meet with some whom we almost feared we should never meet again; whose

whose great Failings, which we so often observed in them on Earth, are all mercifully forgiven and cancelled through the Merits of the Redeemer's Blood; and who might find a more easy Pardon from GOD than they did from Men; for his Grace often surmounts and covers those Sins which Man's Charity cannot.

3. The holy Angels also then will be our dear and delightful Associates. Full of Benevolence, Condescension and Goodness, will they welcome us to their happy Regions, and readily do all that their superior Knowledge and exalted Station enable them to do towards the Increase of our Happiness. But,

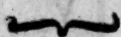
*Lastly*, That which will crown all, and be the very Joy of all our Joy is, that there we shall see GOD.

That which is called the *Beatifick Vision*, or the Vision of GOD himself, wherein the Sum of the Saint's Happiness is usually supposed to consist, we cannot indeed perfectly know. But this we know, that there will be some near and peculiar Manifestations which GOD will then make of himself, and that those Manifestations will be accompanied with inexpressible Joy to the Soul.—

And

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And our glorious Redeemer we shall have a familiar Sight of, and an intimate Converse with; shall behold him personally, and in that very Body in which he suffered to purchase all that profusion of Happiness for us, and in which every Eye shall see him when he comes to Judgment. And, O, the pleasing Intercourse that will then pass between him and the *many Sons* whom his Grace hath *brought to Glory*! But this is a Subject to which no mortal thought is equal; and a Happiness to which our highest Ideas of Delight and Pleasure are infinitely inferior. I must therefore drop it, as out of my Reach to describe, and yours to apprehend.

And now let us lay all these things together, and in our retired Minutes go over them again with ourselves distinctly; and contemplate this future Felicity of the Righteous in Heaven as now faintly represented, both in the several Properties of it, and the various Sources from whence it flows, and we shall have some Idea of that *Gladness which is sown for the Righteous*, and is now springing up for them in the other World.

And, O, why do not these Thoughts make us weary of this World? And sick of  
that



that Sin and Sorrow with which we are incessantly beset?—How can we be contentedly Strangers to all that solid, constant Joy, which is the portion of the Blessed?—

Have not the foregoing Thoughts warmed and animated us? Do they not even make us impatient of Earth and Flesh?—But this is our time and state of Suffering—

Those blessed Saints had theirs before us

—A little more Faith and Patience will carry us through all to that unspeakable Blessedness whereof we have now been entertaining ourselves with an imperfect View; and of which they are safely and for ever possessed.—In the mean time we must continue working, waiting, watching and praying—and *we shall reap if we faint not.*

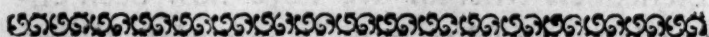
Reap that full Harvest of *Light and Gladness* which is now sown for the Righteous and Upright in Heart.

His Heaven within must attract us thither  
to our conversation in Heaven must  
excite our desires to depart  
be with Christ there  
He is dwelling much on the mount of  
Contemplation & abiding w<sup>th</sup> God in our  
Secular callings & having our evidences  
clear, arming our selves S E R- agt the  
fears of death



## S E R M O N VI.

The future HAPPINESS of the  
R I G H T E O U S .



P S A L M xcvii. II.

*Light is sown for the Righteous ;  
and Gladness for the Upright in  
Heart.*



IN these Words the following things  
are observable.

- I. The Character that is here given of  
good Men, They are *Righteous and  
Upright.*
- II. Their present State implied, *Darkness  
and Sorrow.*
- III. Their

III. Their future Happiness expressed, *SERM.*  
*Light and Gladness.* *VI.*

*Lastly, The Metaphor under which this*  
*is described, Light is sown for the*  
*Righteous.*

The three first of these I have particularly considered in the two preceding Discourses. I come now to the last thing proposed, and that is,

IV. To examine into the Beauty, Propriety and Import of the Metaphor under which the Promise in the text is made, *Light is sown for the Righteous, &c.*

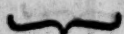
This is a Metaphor often used in the sacred Writings. *Solomon* tells us, that *to him that soweth Righteousness shall be a sure Reward*, Prov. xi. 18. and, *that he that soweth Iniquity shall reap Vanity*, Prov. xxii. 8. In like manner the Apostle *Paul* tells us, *that whatever a Man soweth that shall he reap*, Gal. vi. 8.

Now by attending to the import of this Metaphor, so common in Scripture, we may be able to throw some Light upon the Subject in the text where it is used, and illustrate



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strate some particulars relating to it in a plain and easy manner. And it seems naturally to imply the following things.

1. That something must be done by the Righteous now, in order to their being partakers of that Happiness which is prepared for them in Heaven. The Husbandman can never expect a Crop if he never sows. If he neglects his Season, in vain will he look for a Harvest.

2. Though the future Blessedness of the Righteous must now be sown by themselves, yet it is nevertheless the free Gift of God. The Husbandman can do no more than prepare his Ground, and throw in his Seed, the rich and plenteous Harvest that ensues he owes to the Bounty of Heaven.

3. That the Saints on Earth should patiently wait for their Glory in Heaven. So *the Husbandman waiteth for the precious Fruit of the Earth, and hath long Patience for it, Jam. v. 7.*

4. That they should encourage themselves with the Hopes and Prospects of it, and thankfully acknowledge those Providences, and Dispensations, which tend to prepare and fit them for it; as the Husbandman does  
those

those fruitful and suitable seasons which raise his Hopes of a plentiful Harvest. SERM. VI.

Of each of these particularly;

1. Something must be done by the Righteous now, in order to their being Partakers of that Happiness which is prepared for them in Heaven. The Husbandman can never expect a Crop, if he never sows. If he neglect his Season, in vain will he look for a Harvest.

The Husbandman, you know, before he sows his Seed, takes care to prepare his Ground, by rooting out those noxious Weeds which would prevent the Growth of the Corn; and then, to get it into Heart and Order, he dresses and manures it in the best manner he can, and then after proper Tillage and Culture, he throws in the best Seed, he can procure at the proper Season; and so leaves it with due Tendence and Watchfulness to the Blessing of Heaven. — In this manner then must we proceed if we would sow to ourselves Righteousness.

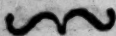
1. We must endeavour to *root out* of our Hearts those sinful Prejudices and Affections, and those worldly Lusts and Cares

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which

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which so plentifully spring up there, and which are so apt to choak the divine Seed that is sown in the Heart, and render it unfruitful, *Matth. xiii. 22.* Whilst those are retained and harboured, this can never take the entire Possession of the Heart. As well may a Man *serve God and Mammon*, be a Servant of Christ, and a Slave of Sin, at the same time, as pretend to cultivate that Righteousness, which is the Principle of the heavenly Felicity, whilst he indulges those sinful Affections that chain his Heart to Vanity. Besides,

2. There is much Care and Pains requisite in order rightly to *prepare* the Heart to receive the Grace of Life, by Contemplation, Meditation, and holy Thoughts; and by Reading, and Prayer, and such devout Exercises, as tend to promote it's spiritual Strength and Vigour, and dispose it to retain and cherish the divine Seed that is sown in it. For without this it will be cold, and dead, and languid towards divine things, and be disposed to entertain and cherish none but vain and unprofitable Thoughts, as the barren and uncultivated Earth does Weeds.

3. As



3. As the Earth must be often *tilled* and *stirred* to improve and mellow it, to fit it for the Reception of the Seed, so we must *stir up our Hearts* to fit them for the Reception of the divine Word; and call upon our Souls, and all that is within us, to seek the Lord, and praise his holy Name. For the human Heart is naturally so barren a Soil, that all the Pains we can take is little enough to cultivate it so, as that it may bring *forth Fruit unto eternal Life*.

4. As the Husbandman is careful to provide the *best Seed* he can get, so we must take care to have the *best Principles* fixt in our Hearts; for we are commanded to take heed, not only *how* we hear, but *what* we hear (*a*); that we do not mix Chaff or Tares with the Wheat, or receive those Principles for the Truths of God which are only the Inventions of Men; and those Notions as the Doctrines of true Religion, which may be destructive of the proper Influence and Power of it.

We must then receive the divine Word in it's Season. A good Seed-time the Husbandman looks upon as a great Blessing, and

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(a) Mark iv. 24.

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improves it accordingly. And many such Seasons, in a spiritual Sense, have we all received; many have we neglected, and mis-improved. But they are still repeated; and we have still the Warnings of God's Word before us, to take heed what we sow; for according to that will be our future Harvest. *If we sow to the Flesh, we shall of the Flesh reap Corruption; but if we sow to the Spirit, we shall of the Spirit reap Life everlasting (b).*

Lastly, As the Husbandman then leaves all to the Blessing of Heaven, so after all our Endeavours to be meet for the future Glory, we must leave the Success of them to the Grace of God.

This therefore brings me to the second Observation I made on the Metaphor in the text, viz.

Though the future Blessedness of the Righteous must now be sown by themselves, yet it is nevertheless the free Gift of God. The Husbandman can do no more than prepare his Ground, and throw in his Seed, the rich and plenteous Harvest that

(b) Gal. vi. 7, 8.

that insues, he owes to the Bounty of Heaven. SERM. VI.

Under this Head then I propose to illustrate and establish this great Doctrine of the Gospel, *that by Grace we are saved, through Faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the Gift of God.* As under the former Head I endeavoured to shew you, that before we can warrantably hope for Salvation, or the Blessedness of Heaven, there is a great deal necessary to be done on our part, I am now to shew you, that after all we can do, our Salvation is not to be ascribed to our own Works, but to divine Grace.

The Metaphor before us may serve to illustrate this to us very happily. The Husbandman cleanses, prepares, dresses, tills, and plows his Ground, and yet the Harvest he expects, after all is owing to the Bounty of Heaven; so the Christian reads, and hears, and prays, and meditates, and watches and uses his best Endeavours for the Interest of his Soul; and yet, after all, his Salvation is owing to the free Grace of God. If you ask, *how are we to conceive of this?* I answer; consider but the Case just before mentioned, and you will be able to answer that



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Question to yourselves. It is not the Labour of the Husbandman that causes the Harvest, though there can be no Harvest expected without it; so it is not the Diligence of a Christian that is the procuring Cause of his Salvation, though he can never hope for Salvation without it. Both are necessary to their respective Ends, only as subordinate Causes, *without which* those Ends cannot ordinarily be attained.

But more particularly. There are two things to which the springing and ripening the sowed Corn, so as to produce a complete Harvest, are immediately owing. And they are the *vegetative Quality* of the Earth, and *seasonable Weather*.

The former of these is that Virtue of Power with which all kinds of Earth are endued, in a greater or less Degree, of dissolving or digesting the Seed thrown into it, or of softening and opening the Root in such a manner as to cause it to take in those nutritive Juices of the Earth, which by their Circulation through the proper Vessels are so maturated and refined, as to turn it into the substance of the Plant; and so promote it's Growth till it is brought to a state

state of Perfection, wherein it sheds a Seed like itself, to produce others of the same kind. But the Doctrine of Vegetation is so mysterious, that it very much checks and confounds all our philosophical Enquiries. So that some have been inclined to cut the matter short, and to solve all it's Difficulties in the same manner they do those that attend the Doctrine of Gravitation, by attributing it to the immediate Agency of some invisible Being, or the continual Impulse or Impression of the divine Power. Which is all that the Antients could mean by their *plastic Virtue*. But certain it is, that without this vegetative Quality of the Earth (which is a thing we know little of) there could be no such thing as the Growth of Plants or Herbs, that being the immediate Cause of this.

The other thing which contributes to the Growth and ripening the Seed sown, is *seasonable Weather*; which is necessary to preserve the due Temperament of the Earth and Air, that the former may have a suitable Degree of Moisture and Driness, and the latter a proper Degree of Heat or Cold.

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Both these are universally allowed to be necessary to the Growth of Vegetables.

Now what I would observe here is, that answerable to these there are two things equally necessary to the Growth of the spiritual Seed sown in the Heart. And they are *inward Operations* and *external Dispensations*. The former corresponding with the vegetative Quality of the Earth, and the latter answering to the Suitableness of Seasons, so necessary to the Growth and Produce of the Plant.

1. Then, the first thing immediately necessary to make the divine Seed (that is, the Word of God) *take root downward, and spring upward*, is the secret Operation of the Spirit of God, answerable to the formentioned vegetative Quality of the Earth. And between these there is a plain Resemblance in several Respects.

1. They are both of them Mysteries. And therefore the one can with no more reason be doubted or denied than the other. And to deny either purely because it is a Mystery, is to make it a Rule to ourselves, both in natural and spiritual things, to believe nothing but what we can comprehend,

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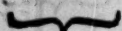


or account for by the help of our own Reason, which of all things is the most unreasonable. That the holy Spirit of God hath a free Access to, and exerts a powerful Efficacy on the Minds of Men, is certain from Experience. And that this divine Power is necessary for the Formation of the *new Creature*, or the spiritual Renovation of the Soul, we learn as certainly from Scripture, as we do, that the vegetative Power of the Earth is necessary for the Formation of the Plant, from Sense and Observation. Both the one and the other are as sensible in their Effects as they are secret in their Operation. It is the holy Spirit of God then, setting Home the divine Word with Life and Power, and convincing Force upon the Heart, which makes it effectual to the Conversion and Salvation of them that hear it.

2. The Operations of the holy Spirit upon the Heart are for the most part gradual and insensible, as the progress of Vegetation is in the Plant. You cannot see the Plant grow, but you may see it hath grown. So the Operations of the Spirit are often discernable only in their Effects. A Christian may not be able, perhaps, to determine for  
certain

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certain that at any particular time he is under the special Operations of the Spirit, but may think he is not so, when he really is; or, on the other hand, that he is so, when he really is not; by mistaking the Impressions of a natural Imagination for those of a spiritual Operation. But by the steady Piety, Devotion, and holy Temper of his Soul, he may with certainty conclude, that he hath been under those gracious and divine Operations; and that to them he ought to ascribe his habitual and growing Desires and Dispositions towards GOD and Heaven and Holiness.

3. We may justly conceive a good Degree of Resemblance between the *Progress* of Vegetation in the Seed, and that of divine Operations on the Soul. The vegetative Power of the Earth first softens and dissolves the Seed, then causes it to take Root, then to put forth a tender Blade, which insensibly improves to a stronger Stalk; after which it produces the Green Ear, then the ripened Ear full of Grain, and then it is brought to it's state of Perfection. In like manner the divine Grace sometimes proceeds with the Soul in bringing it to Glory. It first softens  
the

the Heart by the Convictions of the Word, makes an inward Change in it not immediately visible in the Life; that spiritual Change (which, very pertinently to our Metaphor, is in Scripture called the Root of the Matter) is improved till it is plainly discerned in the Temper and Life; these Fruits of Holiness (as Grace grows stronger and stronger) are more and more apparent, till they issue in a fixed habitual Heavenliness of Temper, and are finally made perfect in Glory. Hence we see the Propriety of that common Observation, *that Holiness is Happiness in it's first Principle*, as the Seed contains in it the Principle of the future Ear; or Grace is Glory begun, and Glory is Grace in it's Perfection.

I do not say that this is always and invariably the Method in which the Holy Ghost proceeds in his Operations on the Heart of Man. No, he hath various Ways in bringing the Soul to God. But I believe this is the most usual Way in the present settled Times of the Gospel Dispensation. Instantaneous Conversions we find chiefly confined to the Age of Miracles, and may justly be reckoned among the extraordinary Effects of the



SERM. the divine Power; and therefore are not or-  
VI. dinarily to be expected now.

4. As it is uncertain at what particular Instant the Seed begins to take Root in the Ground, so it is no less difficult to determine for certain the precise time when the Heart is first effectually turned to G O D. If we see the Plant grows we know it hath taken Root, though we may not know the exact time when it first began to do so. In like manner, if the Fruits of Righteousness appear in our Lives, we may be sure the Word of G O D hath had a saving Effect upon our Hearts, though we may not know the precise time when it took that Effect. And without this we cannot be sure it hath had any such Effect at all; for if the divine Seed *take Root downward*, it will *spring upward*. And this is the only Rule our Saviour hath given us to judge by in this Matter, *By their Fruits ye shall know them*, Matt. vi. 20. — But to proceed,

2. Divine Grace is planted and improved in the Soul, not only by inward *Operations*, but by means of outward *Dispensations*.

As the Suitableness of the Season concurs with the vegetative Property of the Earth  
to

to improve and ripen the Seed, so the *Ordinances* and *Providences* of GOD concur with the *Operations* of his Spirit to effect and perfect a saving Change in the Soul.

I. The *Ordinances* of GOD are often made use of to this End.

These are commonly called the *Means of Grace*, because they are not only the Means of obtaining Grace, but of strengthening and improving it. And with this View it is equally the Duty of all, devoutly to attend them; that they who are as yet destitute of a saving Change of Heart may, by the Blessing of GOD, hereby come to a happy Experience of it, and that they who have experienced it may thus have it improved and cultivated.

And, O, how safely may I here appeal to the Experience of many a serious and sincere Christian! who have had their Hearts warmed, quickened, and refreshed, their holy Dispositions strengthened and confirmed, and their Spirits made more serious and heavenly, by their diligent and devout Attendance on sacred Ordinances; out of a dutiful regard to the Authority of GOD, who hath appointed them, as the proper and direct

SERM. rect means for the Establishment of their  
 VI. Grace and Virtue; and who hath promised  
 his Blessing to render them effectual to that

End. No Man, I am sure, ever attained to a confirmed Degree of Grace, or heavenly Hope, or any Eminence in real Religion by a Neglect of divine Ordinances, or a formal spiritless Attendance on them. Many who attend them constantly and conscientiously have been Persons of eminent Goodness. And to the happy Effect of holy Ordinances (which, by the Blessing of GOD, hath been the means of gradually mending their Spirits) they ought to ascribe it, that they are so. And their gradual Improvements in Grace is their growing fitness for Glory. Thus by the heavenly Dews of the Sanctuary the divine Seed is cherished and improved, till it bring forth immortal Fruit.

2. The *Dispensations* of Providence is another means which GOD is pleased sometimes to make use of for promoting the Increase of the holy Principle in the Heart.

These are various; some joyous and pleasing, others grievous and painful; but all happily conducive to the same End.

All



All Sun-shine is not seasonable or proper for the Growth of the Corn. Stormy Winds, pinching Frosts, and chilling Snow, sometimes have their Use. And the coldest Weather, though for the present it may check the Corn, yet may appear afterwards to have been useful to it, as it killed those Weeds and Insects which would otherwise have hurt it.

Thus uninterrupted Prosperity and Peace are not good for a Christian, however they may be desired by him. Carnality, Confidence, Pride, Security, and Idolence, often spring from thence, like Vermin bred in the Sun, which can only be destroyed by the nipping Blasts of Adversity. And when one and the other is most seasonable for the Soul, and how long it shall continue, we must leave to the Will and Wisdom of him who hath promised, that where the *good Work is begun in the Soul he will carry it to Perfection*; and that with the same perfect Acquiescence and Submission as we leave the Disposition of the Seasons and Weather with him, who hath promised, that *Summer and Winter, Seed-time and Harvest, shall not fail.*

Thus

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Thus then, by the Dispensations of God's Grace and Providence, the *upright Man* increases in Righteousness, and consequently in a Fitness for the heavenly Light and Glory, as by suitable and seasonable Weather the Corn that is sown in the Earth is brought to it's proper Maturity and Ripeness; but both are under the Disposition of the divine Wisdom, and therefore the Effects of both are to be equally ascribed to G O D.

And if we keep this Metaphor in mind, which we so often find in Scripture, and compare these two Cases together, I cannot but think it would be a very good Preservative against those two Extremes into which different Persons are very apt to run; that is, either of ascribing Salvation intirely to the Endeavours of Men, as some do, or absolutely and only to the Grace of G O D, without the Necessity of any such Labour and Endeavour on Man's part, as others do. Both equally absurd. For with the same Reason may the former be confident of a good Harvest, be the Weather what it will) because he hath taken care of his Ground, and the other expect a good Crop without plowing or sowing. Whereas the Truth is  
—the

— the Grace of GOD in the spiritual Life is as necessary as the Blessing of GOD in the natural Life, to crown our Endeavours with Success; and without our own Care and Pains and Diligence we have no warrant to hope for the Grace of GOD in the one case, or his Blessing in the other. — I now proceed,

3. Another thing that we may learn from the Metaphor in the Text is, that the Saints on Earth should patiently wait for their Glory in Heaven. *So the Husbandman waiteth for the precious Fruit of the Earth, and hath long Patience for it, Jam. v. 7.*

And the Author to the Hebrews tells them they have need of Patience in this Case, *Heb. x. 36. Ye have need of Patience, that after ye have done the Will of GOD ye may receive the Promises.* That is, ye have need of Patience in waiting for the Accomplishment of them. And the more joyful Prospects they have had of the heavenly Light and Glory, and the more grievous Calamities they have suffered in the present state of Darknes and Sorrow, the more need they have to fortify their ardent and longing Souls



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with this Grace, so proper to a state of Suffering and Hope. For the ardent Hopes of a Christian may create some trial to his Patience, as well as his long and heavy Sufferings. And when they both meet, fore and grievous Sufferings here, and bright and ardent Hopes of Glory hereafter, then it is that the Christian stands in the greatest need of Patience, both in bearing and waiting the Will of GOD.

Great was the Attainment of the Apostle *Paul* in this respect (which is not the least eminent part of his Character) that though few Persons ever endured more on Earth, or had more glorious Hopes and Foretastes of Heaven, yet he was quite resigned as to the manner how, or the time when, he should receive his Dismission out of this Life, and enter upon his Reward. *I am in a Streight* (saith he) *between two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better. Moreover, to abide in the Flesh is more needful for you, Phil. i. 22, 24.* And to this he cheerfully submitted, with the Hope of being further useful to the Church of Christ, before he entered into his full Glory.

Christians

Christians of a warm Spirit of Devotion especially should take care of an impatience of Expectation. As their Hope should support their Patience in suffering, so the Ardor of it should not transport them beyond the Bounds of Patience in waiting. As it did that good Man, who, upon his dying Bed, declared, *that he would not for a World be to live any longer; and the very Thoughts of a Possibility of Recovery made him even tremble;* which I think is mistakenly recorded to his Praise; such a strong Expression favouring too much of Impatience, and a want of that absolute Submission to the all-wise Disposals of Heaven, which is every Christian's Duty (c).

Let Christians then learn of the Husbandman (as the Apostle *James* directs them) to wait patiently for their future Harvest of Joy and Glory. Now is their time of Suffering; their Day of Triumph is not far off. *Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.* Wait patiently then *all the Days of your appointed time;* and bear patiently all that may be appointed you

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in

(c) Life of Mr. *John Janeway*, pag. 101.

*in the mean time, and your Expectation shall not be cut off.*

IV. Another thing we may learn from the Metaphor in the text is, that true Christians should frequently encourage themselves with the Prospects and Hopes of their future Glory; and thankfully acknowledge those Providences and Dispensations which tend to advance and promote it.

Thus does the prudent Husbandman. Many Streights and Difficulties he may be in, but he hath a Prospect of a plentiful Harvest, which will soon ease him of them all, and amply recompense all his Pains. And hath not the righteous and upright Man much more reason to encourage himself with the prospect of that Harvest of Light and Gladness, which is springing up for him in Heaven? Where no Fear shall ever more distress his Mind; nor a Thought shall ever enter there but what shall delight and elevate it.

And for this end it is, that the Happiness of the Saints in Heaven is represented in Scripture under such Figures as are most apt to charm and exalt the Mind, and invite it's  
most





most delightful Contemplations. And for that End have I endeavoured in the two preceding Discourses, to improve the Representation of it in the text, under the notion of *Light* and *Gladness*.

And why should you be backward to think of Heaven, you who hope for ever to dwell there? Why backward to solace and refresh yourselves with such Views, under all the Fatigues of your earthly Pilgrimage; or why should not the Sorrows of Earth drive you to that Resource of Joy and Comfort, ever accessible, ever open? Establish well but your Hopes of it, and you cannot too frequently enjoy those Hopes. They will purify the Soul, and exalt it; and refine it from the Soil and Filth, which a too close attention to the things of this World, is apt to leave upon it.

And thus have I endeavoured particularly to open and improve the Metaphor in the text, where the Happiness of Heaven is said to be sown *for the Righteous*. I shall now conclude all with a few short Reflections upon the whole.

1. If the future Happiness of the righteous and upright in Heart be *Light* and *Gladness*, what will hereafter be the Portion

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of wicked Men and Hypocrites? Certainly the reverse of what is here promised to the righteous will be the Lot of those who bear the reverse of their Character. And what is that but *Darkness* and *Torment*? The very Terms by which our Saviour expresses the Punishment of the Wicked in the other World, *Mat. viii. 12. Luke xvi. 28.*

2. From what hath been said on this Subject, we see how exactly the Felicity of the Saints in the other World corresponds with their Tempers and Characters in this.

GOD is a GOD of Righteousness and Truth. In these things he doth delight. And therefore none but the righteous and the upright can be the Objects of his Love. And it is his Love that opens all the Sources of Bliss in Heaven. — Or thus; all the Happiness of Heaven consists in the Enjoyment of GOD. None can enjoy him but those that are like him. But he is a GOD of Righteousness and Truth; and therefore nothing but this can make us like him. Nothing less than this then can qualify us for Heaven, or fit us for the Happiness of it. A solid Reflection, and substantial Truth! As certain from the very nature of things, as it is from the  
Word

Word of GOD; and equally administering Comfort to those who are conscious of their Integrity, and Terror to those who indulge Iniquity.

3. We hence see how unreasonable it is for good Men to give themselves up to Discontent and Melancholy, be their outward Circumstances in this World ever so afflicted.

When a good Man droops and grieves and mourns and bows down his Head like a Bull-rush, and refuses to be comforted, he does a mighty Dishonour to his Faith. It looks as if he neither trusted the Providence, nor believed the Word of GOD; and that he doubted the Truth (or, at least, that he seldom thought) of what he there reads, *viz. that the Sufferings of the present Life are not worthy to be compared with the Glory that shall be revealed; that these light Afflictions, which are but for a Moment, are designed to work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory; and if we are faithful unto Death, we shall receive a Crown of Life.* — A melancholy Christian, with all the glorious Prospects of the Gospel before him, is a very inconsistent Character.



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4. What reason have we to be thankful that GOD hath been pleased to throw so much Light and Gladness into this dark and miserable World, by the Discoveries which his Gospel makes of the Glory and Happiness of a better.

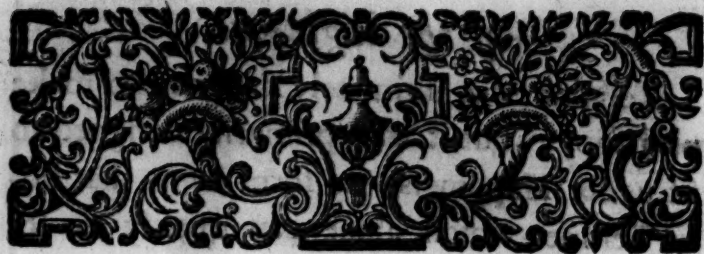
An impenetrable Cloud indeed intercepts our clear View of that heavenly Glory, yet such a Glimmering of it shines through that Cloud as cheers our Hearts, and animates our Hopes, and gives us sufficient Light to guide us to it. Blessed be GOD, we are not left in total Darkness. The Gospel hath brought the Life of Immortality to Light, so far as it is necessary for us to know it in the present State. And the more we study the Word and Perfections of GOD, and the nature of true Holiness, the better acquainted shall we be with that World of Light, and Life, and Glory we hope to be for ever in.

*Lastly,* We see how infinitely it is our Interest and Wisdom to cultivate that Righteousness and Integrity of Heart, which alone can fit us for the heavenly Happiness, and on which all the Promises of it are suspended.

Religion

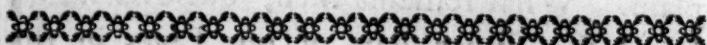
Religion was ultimately designed to make us happy ; but it was primarily designed to fit us for Happiness ; to form in us that holy Temper which alone can qualify us for the heavenly Glory ; to make us like God that we may be capable of enjoying Him. Whatever hath this Tendency and Effect, *that* is Religion ; whatever hath no such Effect or Tendency may be called Religion indeed, but it is falsely so called. This is plain. What remains then, but that we all spend the future Part of our Lives in the Prosecution of that Holiness and Righteousness which alone will make us like to, and fit us for the everlasting Enjoyment of God ? *And what God hath thus joined together let no Man put asunder.*

And now, *Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant Mercy, hath begotten us again to this lively Hope, through the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. And may his Grace be more and more fitting us for that Inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away ; reserved in Heaven for them who are kept by his mighty Power, through Faith, unto Salvation.*



## S E R M O N VII.

The INSTABILITY of a DOUBLE  
MINDED MAN.



J A M E S i. 8

*A Double minded Man is unstable in  
all his Ways.*



A N is a variable Creature. Every Man is so; and does not differ from every Body else more than he does, at some times, from himself.

This is a common Observation. But that which the Apostle takes notice of in the text is something more, *viz.* that there are some who are not only in different *Temper*s at different Times, but are governed by contrary



trary *Principles*, and have, as it were, *two Minds* almost at all Times, which occasions great Instability of Conduct, and Inconsistency of Character. They have contrary Inclinations in their Hearts, by which they are drawn contrary Ways; and are so equally influenced by opposite Objects, that they cannot with the full Bent of their Minds pursue either the one or the other; but are continually halting, wavering, and vibrating between both; sometimes inclined to this, and sometimes to that, according to the last Impressions they received from either.

This Unsteadiness and Irresolution is a great Weakness in our Natures, and in nothing more visible than in our Regards to those very different Objects, the things of this World, and those of the other; under which View I shall now particularly consider it.

The Words contain a Proposition, whose Sense is independent of the Context; and therefore I shall take up no Time in a critical Examination of that.—The Proposition itself consists of two Parts.

*The Instability of*

I. The Character of one who is irresolute and unfixed in his leading Views and Desires, He is a *Double minded Man*.

II. The Effect of such an unsteady, wavering Disposition, it produces a strange Instability and Inconsistency of Conduct. *A Double minded Man is unstable in all his Ways.*

These two things I shall particularly consider, and then shew you the practical Improvement that ought to be made of this Subject at large.

I. We have the Character of one who is irresolute and unfixed in his leading Views and Desires, He is a *Double minded Man*.

His Mind is divided between G O D and the World. He sacrifices both to G O D and *Mammon*. He aims at what our Saviour says is impossible; and would serve two contrary Masters. He loves this World most passionately and supremely, and would be thought to love G O D as much. He retains all his worldly Lusts, his Pride, his Passion, his Covetousness, his Self-sufficiency, his worldly

worldly Dependance, and his strong Affection for Vanity. And yet he dares not cast off all Regard for Religion neither. He dares not renounce Christianity and his Conscience; but would be thought to have as great a regard for his Soul as other Men. And some regard for it he has; and more especially at some times. When his Mind is cool and sober, and free from those worldly Passions which so generally inflame it; when he is brought into a thoughtful Mood by reading some serious Book in private, or hearing some warm and awakening Discourse in publick; he is then full of self-reproaches; he severely blames his Temper and Conduct; and calls himself a thousand Fools for being so passionately fond of Vanity, and living so forgetful of Eternity and his immortal Soul. Then his good Purposes return, and he is all for GOD and Heaven, and Immortality. And *Vanity of Vanities* he pronounces upon every thing else.

And happy were it for him if such a Frame continued, if he could preserve this good Disposition. But, alas! *like a Morning Cloud, or as the early Dew*, it is soon gone. The very next Morning, perhaps, (for we will suppose



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pose these good thoughts and purposes to return upon him in the Evening of the Lord's Day) as soon as he is engaged in the Affairs of the World, his Heart takes fire again, and all the unhallowed Passions are rekindled. The Prospect of Gain, or Pleasure, or Preferment transports him; he breaks through every Obligation of Reason and Religion, all the Restraints of Decency, Honour and Reputation, to gratify his governing Passion. His Conscience is silenced. He is now assured that worldly Gain is substantial Good. He sees, and feels it to be so; let weak Minds and speculative Men think and say what they will. The World is his GOD, and he will adore it.

And in this Idolatry he is very zealous and devout; till it be interrupted by the unwelcome Return of that holy Day, when he is again called off from the World to the Worship of the true GOD. And then, after the first Uneasiness, of having such a check put upon the Bent of his Inclinations is a little over, his Mind begins to be sedate and serious again. And then his Devotion and Self-reproaches return upon him together; till, as before, they both vanish

nish again at the very next Scene and Prospect of worldly Advantage that offers.

This is a brief and general Description of a *Double minded Man*. But more particularly, this Expression denotes a great Variation in all the three leading Powers of the Mind, the *Understanding*, *Will*, and *Affections*.

1. His *Understanding* is various. His Sentiments at one Time are very different from what they are at another. He sees things through a different Medium, and in a different Light; and therefore his Apprehension and Judgment of them is different at different Times.

Now he apprehends the Value of his Soul and the Vanity of the World; sees the Worth and Excellency of Religion in the clearest Light, and is convinced that nothing but Heaven ought to be Object of his chief care and main Pursuit. He readily falls in with, and feels the Weight of Solomon's Sentiment, *Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity and Vexation of Spirit*. And joins with him in the Conclusion of the whole Matter, that *to fear God, and keep his Commandments, is the whole of Man*, Eccles. xii. 13.

And

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And were this Frame to continue, what an excellent Christian would he be ! How great an Alteration should we soon see in the Man ! What Seriousness and Sobriety, instead of Sloth and Sensuality !——But, alas ! he is presently another Man. He goes into Company and the World, and his Heart receives it's old Tincture. His Thoughts and Sentiments are quite altered. His Temper as vain, as light, as earthly as ever. He thinks he may and ought to love the World, and indulge his Passions and his Pleasures. And herein he does nothing but what he sees almost every Body else do. He looks upon those Ministers and Authors who speak and write so freely of the Vanity of these Things as too precise and stiff by far ; and fancies it is only the Effect of Spleen and Envy, of a narrow Spirit, or an *Ignorance of the World*. “ That it is talking in our own Way ; and “ he will bear with us because *we know no “ better*. But Men of Genius, Wit, and “ Spirit, talk and think in a different Strain.” And therefore he concludes, that his former Thoughts of the Matter were only the Effects of a gloomy Imagination, or a melancholy turn of Mind.——And thus does he think



*a double minded Man.*

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think about the most important Things as differently from himself, as if he had actually *two Understandings*.

2. The *double minded* Man moreover acts as if he had two *Wills*. For Instance, with regard to any particular Duty; sometimes he finds himself readily enough inclined to it, at other Times he is most averse and reluctant; and can scarce, with all the Command he hath over himself, persuade his Heart to set about it. At one time he goes to it with Delight, at another time he can hardly drag his backward Mind, even to the dullest Performance of it.

So with respect to any particular Sin; at one time he can venture upon it without Scruple, at another time his Conscience startles and hesitates. Now his Will is set towards his Duty, now towards his Lusts. Now he minds *Carnal*, and now *Spiritual Things*. And thus he becomes a perpetual Contradiction to himself.

Nay, with respect to the same Action, or the same Object, his Will is often drawn two contrary Ways at the same time.

3. The *double minded* Man will find the same Diversity and Contrariety in the other

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leading Power of his Soul, the *Affections*. Which are spiritual or carnal, serious or sensual, heavenly or worldly, just as the two contrary Principles of Flesh and Spirit prevail in him; which alternately sway the Mind; and of which alternate Sway this Variableness of Temper, I am now treating of, is the certain Effect.

How devoutly and heavenly are our Affections sometimes when we get nearest to God, and are carried in our Contemplations to eternal and invisible Things! After that we are ready to imagine, that nothing mortal could ever move us. But we soon come down to Earth again; when our Hearts presently begin to hover over the World, and cling, and clasp, and center to it again as closely as if it were indeed our Rest, and we regretted a short Absence from it.

Thus have we taken a brief View of the *double minded Man*. An unhappy Character; but none more common. Such an unsteady, wavering, inconstant, vague and variable Temper we observe and smile at in Children, who discover it in the lowest Things; but we neither see nor pity it in  
our-

ourselves, who discover it more in the highest Concerns. But let us now,

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II. Consider briefly the Effect of this unhappy Temper mentioned in the text.

This Variableness of Temper, the Apostle *James* saith, is always attended with an Instability of Conduct. *A double minded Man is unstable in all his Ways.* That is, in all those Instances in which his Heart is so divided, his Behaviour must be incoherent and various. His Conduct is as unsteady as his Temper. But as I have confined *this* to Things of Religion, I shall consider *that*, which is the Effect of it, under the same Restriction.

Now this Instability of a *double minded* Man's Conduct, (though it be evident enough of itself, as the Effect of his Temper, yet) it may not be amiss briefly to represent under three different Views.

1. He is inconstant in his *Purposes* and *Pursuits*. This is a natural Effect of that divided Mind we are speaking of. So it was with the revolting Jews in the Prophet's Time. *Their Heart is divided* (saith GOD,) *i. e.* between me and Baal; *therefore shall*



SERM. *they be found faulty; and are as an empty*  
 VII. *Vine, Hof. x. 2. Were the Heart once fix-*

ed to a Point, it would soon know what to purpose and prosecute; but having no steady certain Views, it must of Consequence be undetermined. What it desires at one time, it despises at another; soon flies from what it before pursued; and again pursues what it lately so industriously avoided.

Thus a double minded Man spends his whole Life, as it were, in doing and undoing; in sinning and repenting; till his last Summons comes, and then indeed he is determined. Death, or the near and certain Prospect of it, fixes his Views intirely for God and Heaven; but it is under the Amazement and Horror of this Reflection, *that he hath but a few Hours to do that in, which ought to have been the Business of his Life; but which he could never before fully find in his Heart to make so.* However variable and changing the Heart may be in Life, it will be fixed in Death. But then it may be too late.

2. Another Effect of such a divided Heart is, that it can seldom in good earnest *fall in with the Dictates of Conscience* in the plainest Instances

*a double minded Man.*

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Instances of Duty. Be the Duty ever so important, the Call of Providence ever so loud, the Voice of Conscience ever so strong, there is something within that draws him back, and makes him dull, cold and reluctant, where others are, and he himself ought to be, all Life, Spirit and Zeal. He drags heavily towards it, as if every Action that is sacred to GOD, were a Clog upon his Life and Liberty; and Religion, which was designed to set him free from the Captivity of Sin, were itself his greatest Chain. — Thus it is at those Times when the carnal part of his Temper prevails, as it generally does.

3. The double minded Man is easily overcome *in an Hour of Temptation*. The faint Purposes of Mind, which he sometimes hath for GOD and Goodness, are no Guard upon him against a sudden Surprise. His good Impressions are all lost; and have left nothing behind them to be an Anchor and Stay to his Soul, under a violent or unexpected Assault of the Tempter, so that he readily yields. Which he hath no sooner done, than he repents. And under the very next Temptation sins again. And then re-

SERM. pents again. And thus *unstable is he in all*  
 VII. *his Ways.*

I might further illustrate this by considering his Behaviour in a time of Prosperity and Adversity, when the *double minded* Man is quite different from himself, and the Instability of his Ways is most apparent. But what hath been said already, I apprehend, is sufficient to explain that unhappy Weakness of our Nature, which the Apostle speaks of in the Text. I shall therefore now address myself to a particular Improvement of the Subject.

#### APPLICATION.

We have now had this unhappy Temper mentioned in the Text particularly described to us, together with some of it's mischievous Effects. It is what we are all of us in some Degree or other subject to, and we ought to be ashamed and humbled at the Thought; considering what infinite reason there is that the Mind should be fixed, intirely fixed, for GOD and Heaven, and the Concerns of Eternity.

There is indeed a more wretched Temper still than that I have described. And that



that is a steady Disposition to Sin. Where the Mind is fixed, but fixed the wrong way, so that it hath scarce any Variation towards the Things of GOD, and another World. Such a Man indeed is not *unstable in all his Ways*, but determined, resolute, and unalterably bent and settled one Way, and that is the wrong. But as this is what my Text does not lead me directly to consider, I shall take no further Notice of it.

But as that Variableness of Temper, and Instability of Conduct, with regard to Religion before described, are what we have all of us too much reason to complain of, I therefore propose, that I may apply the Subject in a proper manner,

- I. To shew you to what Objects our main Views ought always to be determined.
- II. In what Manner we are to fix them.
- III. Conclude all with an affectionate Address to the double minded Man.

I. Let us seriously consider what are those Objects to which our main Views ought always to be determined.

And here, Reader, give me leave to address myself to you in the closest and plainest manner possible, as a *reasonable* Creature. For that which takes hold of our Reason, Understanding, and Conscience, sticks the longest by us. Whereas the Impressions that are made upon the Mind by an artful or vehement Address to the Passions only, are soon gone, and leave no good Effect behind them. And besides, they may be raised upon any Subject, may lead a Man any Way, and very often lead him the wrong Way. But the Convictions of Conscience and sound Reason will always lead him right.

— Thus then would I conduct you gradually, step by step, to that which is your great Duty and Concern in the present Affair. And I beseech you follow me with your Attention — Use your Understanding as an intelligent Creature, for the Interests of your immortal Soul, (you will readily enough use it for your lesser Interests) and often think on the following Considerations, and apply them.

1. Then, *there is no Man but what hath, and must have, some leading Views in Life; some grand point at which he aims; and*

to

to which he makes almost all his other Views subservient. There is something which he wishes to be or have above every thing else; which employs his Thoughts, animates his Hopes, excites his Cares, and governs his Conduct. For there is no Man so absolutely indifferent as to live entirely at random, without having some great End in Eye, unless he be wrong in his Intellects, and bordering upon Idiotism.

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2. *Common Understanding and Reason will lead a Man to examine what this great End is that he drives at.* Whether it be really worth the Drift and Labour of his Life; what it was that put him upon this pursuit at first, and how he came to be so steady and eager in it; whether it will lead him, and how it will end; whether it be a Course of Conduct suitable to the Choice and Character of a mortal Creature, placed in this World for a little while, and who is to live for ever in another; that is, in short, whether his leading Views are right or wrong; and whether they will make him happy or miserable in the End. For to be indifferent about this most material Point is to divest ourselves of the Nobility of our Natures,

and

try out of  
the Question  
How wise  
How noble  
How great  
How useful  
It be as to  
this end  
it be as  
the chief  
-sway be  
can be no  
comparison  
it is so rare  
but is in  
finitely  
more so in  
the future  
Come



SERM. and to act very unbecoming the Dignity and  
 VII. Character of reasonable Creatures.

When the Ship is in full Sail before the Wind, the Pilate must be a Fool or a Madman that never examines her Course, and is unconcerned whether she is making this Speed to the right or the wrong Port; whether she be in a safe Road or among the Shelves.

3. *Every Man then, as a reasonable Creature, endowed by his Maker with Reflection and Understanding, should take special Care that his governing Aims be right.* He should determine and fix his proper Character, and stick to that invariably; however variable his Situation and Circumstances in the World may be.

This is the first thing we are to do in setting out in Life, to consider with ourselves thus.—“What a vast Variety of Characters do I see in the World! How various and how contrary are the Dispositions and Pursuits of Mankind! And yet this busy Species of Mortals have all but one great End to aim at; and that is, *to be happy in another World.* But, O! how miserably do they appear in general to forget  
 “ or

“ or mistake that End, while they seem to  
“ center all their Views in *this*!—Well,  
“ I am one of these busy Mortals, placed  
“ in the same Condition, and acting on the  
“ same stage of Vanity. O, guard me, gra-  
“ cious God, from the general Delusion!  
“ Suffer me to pursue nothing as my great  
“ End, but what will issue in my true Hap-  
“ piness; to make nothing my main pursuit  
“ in Life, but what will yield me solid Com-  
“ fort in Death. Teach me the Way *in*  
“ *which I should go*, and let me *never depart*  
“ *from it*, till it conduct me to thy self, O  
“ thou great Fountain of all Felicity and  
“ Existence, and the Author of mine!”

4. *Before we can know what ought to be our great and governing Views, we must know what we are, and what we are designed for.*

1. *What we are.*—We are Creatures endowed with an immortal as well as a corruptible Nature, capable of spiritual Employments, and a spiritual Happiness. Our Souls are the better part of us; whose peace and well-being therefore we should principally regard and provide for. We are to be as we are, but a little while. Death will soon dissolve this Frame, take down this

crazy

SERM. crazy Tabernacle, and set the Soul at liberty; when we must for ever leave this World, for another we shall never leave.

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Were this single Thought but to be familiar with us, and every Day recollected, it would be a happy Expedient to regulate and moderate our worldly Desires and Pursuits, and fix our governing Views aright. And there is no Thought can be more important, can concern us more, or that ought to be more frequently admitted.

2. *We should also frequently think with ourselves what we are designed for.* It is most certain we were not designed for a long Continuance in this World, or for Happiness in it. The present Circumstances of mortal Life, take them at the best, are incompatible with true Happiness. If every Man in his best State on Earth is altogether Vanity, how then can he be happy? We are designed for another State, into which we are every one of us soon to pass; and that State is eternal; and our Condition there will be according to our Behaviour here; if we behave well here, we shall be happy there: And it is the Favour, and Presence, and Love of GOD, that will be our Happiness there; for no Creature



ture can be happy but in the Favour of it's Creator. And this final, full, and everlasting Happiness we were designed for; and our gracious G O D hath given us the greatest Advantage, Helps and Opportunities to secure it; and nothing but our own wretched, foolish, wrong Choice, and wilful Perseverance therein, can rob us of it.

There is no one can deny the Truth, or the Importance of these Principles. And the reason they have so little Effect upon us, to make us wise and serious is, because they are too seldom attended to. But recollect and ponder them well and it will appear from hence with the highest Degree of Evidence.

5. *That to serve and please, and fear that great God that gave us Being, is our great Concern; and ought at all times to be our governing View, as reasonable Creatures born for Immortality.* This is the Result of all our Reasonings, concerning the proper Happiness of the human Nature; as it was of all the *Royal Philosopher's* Experiments and Expedients in Search of it. When he had proved and pronounced every thing else to be *Vanity of Vanities and Vexation of Spirit*, Now, saith he,

SERM. he, *let us bear the Conclusion of the whole Mat-*  
 VII. *ter ; Fear God, and keep his Commandments,*  
 { *for this is the Whole of Man, Ecclef. xii. 13.*

His whole Concern, the Point to which he ought to bend all his Thoughts, and Cares, and Desires ; his whole Duty now, and his whole Happiness hereafter. — This then should be our governing View ; this our grand Aim through Life ; to be approved of our Maker, and to be happy in his Love ; and to that End, to serve him with Fear and Fidelity all our Days.

Let this then be our steady and invariable View, this the great Principle by which we are acted in every Circumstance in Life, and this the Character which we will resolve to maintain and live up to at all times, *viz. a Friend, a Servant, and Lover of God.*

Thus shall we ever keep our final Happiness in Eye ; be fixed to a Point, and no longer driven by every Wind of Opinion, or Impulse of Passion, or Blast of Temptation ; no longer *double minded* in our Views, or *unstable* in our Ways, but steady, uniform and constant the right way. Which will be a wonderful Satisfaction to us, however

ever little Progress we make in it. Though we move but slow it is a Comfort to think we are right. And it is much better to be slow and cautious in the right way, than to be swift and confident in the wrong.

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Well, thus far then I am sensible we are convinced. We acknowledge this is true. That thus the Mind ought always to be set and directed. That this is our grand Concern, and ought to be our leading Principle; and that we act not a wise and rational, but a most absurd and inconsistent Part, unworthy our Name and Character as reasonable Creatures, if we do not make it so. — And this Conviction were something, if it were lasting. But, alas! the very next Bait the World throws out, we greedily catch at, and quite forget again that we have immortal Souls, and have no Happiness in this World, and are living for Eternity. This therefore brings me to the second thing I proposed in the Application of the Subject, viz.

II. *To consider how this Conviction may be fixed.* Or what it is that is most like to engage us to make the Service and Honour of



SERM. of GOD, and the Happiness of our Souls;  
 VII. our great and governing View through Life,  
 and all other Ends subordinate to this; or  
 what Considerations have most power to fix  
 the Mind to this point, to prevent it's being  
 so wavering and unstable as we too common-  
 ly find it is.

Now here I might mention many Direc-  
 tions and Considerations which might be  
 helpful to you in this Affair. But I shall  
 mention but one, for this reason, because if  
 it hath no Force or Effect upon you, I utter-  
 ly despair that any else will. And it is this,  
*Think every Day you live of that Eternity to*  
*which you are every Day hastening.*

*This  
 thought  
 is necessary  
 to cure  
 the stream  
 variety &  
 folly of the  
 human  
 mind. For  
 we are stupid  
 but the  
 intellect  
 involves  
 and loves  
 God. Love  
 is virtue?  
 a prevailing  
 & to do good.  
 even now as  
 time is a portion  
 of eternity, & heaven  
 consequently of holiness  
 since love  
 is universal goodness  
 that to be influenced  
 by it is truly noble & happy*

This Thought well weighed, surely must  
 make us serious, and awaken all the Powers  
 of our Souls in good earnest to make our  
 immortal Interests our chief Care. At least  
 if this do not, nothing can. Nothing but an  
 almighty and sovereign Act of divine Grace  
 overpowering all Opposition, which we can  
 never expect, if we will not, as reasonable  
 Creatures, think and act for ourselves.

Think, I beseech you, what Eternity is,  
 and how near you are to it. And be amaz-  
 ed that you have thought of your eternal  
 Interest

*Interest*

Interest so little, and that you have neglected it so long. The World you are going into you must be for ever in; this you are now in, you are going out of, and must soon for ever leave. And to spend all your Time and Care to heap up Riches in it, or to enjoy the Pleasure of it, is the vainest and very emptiest Delusion that ever the silly Heart of Man was cheated with, and shews an Insensibility shameful to the Dignity of a thinking Soul.

The Thoughts of Eternity will convince you of this Folly, and fix your Views for your best Interests, if any thing can. But these Thoughts must not be transient, cold, and desultory, but fixed, intent, and frequent. The Soul must be wrapped up, and wholly possessed with the Contemplation, and be carried forward by it to infinite Ages to come.

Suppose now, Death hath done his Office, the Soul dislodged and launched into the eternal World, Judgment past, and it's state fixed for ever, ten thousand Ages past and gone——ten thousand Millions more——and Eternity but still beginning——Ah, what will you think of the few Moments

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N

*Qualities by the grace of God rightly to improve  
time & enjoy that & the eternity above.  
but the errors of the Lord are necessary to be  
found in men when nothing else will so gross  
so readily & void of the world*

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of busy Vanity which you must remember you once spent on Earth!——Shall you not many Millions of Ages hence even quite forget that little momentary Duration you had on Earth? forget that you ever lived here?——Or if you shall remember it for ever, what will you think of it? Shall you think of it in the same manner you do now? And think the things of it to be as important as you do now?——It is most certain you will not. No, no, your Eyes will be then opened for ever. And if you are happy, you will not help upbraiding yourself in the midst of all your Bliss, that you did no more for your GOD, and your dear Redeemer, and your immortal Soul, during that very little space of time which was allowed you on Earth to prepare for Eternity in. And if you are miserable, your incessant Self-reproaches will be insupportable, that with all your affected Wit and Wisdom you should still be that stupid Fool, to suffer yourself to be so gulled by vain Appearances and the false Images of Fancy, as to forget Eternity, and neglect your everlasting Interests; though you was often importuned, called upon, and  
most



*a double minded Man.*

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most earnestly intreated to think of, and provide for them in time.

Reader, I know not how these Thoughts may affect your Mind; they have often affected my own: and have placed the vain Views and wrong Pursuits of Mankind in the most amazing Light. So that I am fully convinced, it is for want of admitting these thoughts more frequently, and more seriously, that Men are generally so divided in their Minds, and so inconstant in their Ways; so hankering and suspended between this World and another: and that nothing tends more strongly to bring the Soul to a Point, and give it a right Bias, than frequently to think with ourselves, what that other World is into which we are passing: and above all, that whatever it is, it will be eternal.

3. I shall conclude all now with a short exhortatory Address to the *double minded Man*; who hath hitherto been *unstable in all his Ways*, or wavering and unsteady in his regards to his immortal Interests.

Haft thou lived now like a reasonable Creature? Can thy own Conscience or Reason acquit thee?—For shame, never va-

SERM.  
VII.

lue thyself upon thy Wisdom more whilst  
thy Conduct thus proclaims thy Folly.—

And canst thou not after all find in thine Heart to be in good earnest about thine everlasting Well-being? Are thy earthly Interests indeed of so much greater Concern to thee? And wilt thou, Man, stand by that Resolution at Death?—no, thou canst not. Why then, I beseech you, why will you chuse to live by those Principles, by which you know you dare not die? Is this to act like a Man? —And yet thou hast the Understanding of a Man; and Sense and Reason, and Conscience too, which inform thee better; and the Word of G O D, and the Spirit of G O D, often call upon thee to chuse a better part. And shall not all this determine thee? Shall one Clod of this base Earth, outweigh in thy Esteem, or keep the Balance even against G O D, and Heaven, and eternal Happiness, in the opposite Scale?—Think with thyself: can any thing possibly equal such Stupidity? —Thou wilt soon be of one Mind. No dying Man is *double minded*. Be of the same Mind now as thou wilt be of then. And suffer thyself no longer to be divided and deluded by foolish Appetites and false Appearances. For  
thou

*a double minded Man.*

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thou canst not in thine own Reason believe that this vain and transitory World thou art going out of, ought to be held in equal Esteem with that eternal Happiness which GOD in his Word hath offered to thee.

I shall conclude all with *Elijah's* Proposal to the People of *Israel*, 1 Kings xviii. 21. *How long halt ye between two Opinions? If the LORD be GOD, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.* Chuse now the Alternative: determine one way or other. If you are resolved for GOD, cleave to him then with all your Heart; if Heaven be your Aim, seek it in good earnest. And learn to contemn the World, which hath so long divided your Heart, and been an unworthy Competitor with your Maker. — But if you are determined for this World, and seek all your Happiness here, throw off then the uneasy Restraints and Obligations of Conscience and Religion, which will but cramp and shackle you in your Pursuits of an earthly Felicity. And let not your Heart be any longer thus distracted and divided between GOD and *Mammon*. — But this latter Choice you cannot make. You tremble at the very Thought. What remains then, but that



SERM. you make the former? and make it in good  
VII. earnest, and stand by it for ever?

~~~~~ In fine then, let G O D have all our Hearts,  
and Eternity more of our Thoughts. And
let the future part of our Lives shew, that
we are in good earnest determined for G O D,
and seek all our Happiness from him and
his Love, as the Fountain of everlasting Joy.
Amen.





S E R M O N V I I I .

The common S O U R C E of false
J U D G M E N T .



J O H N ^{7.} ~~4.~~ 24.

*Judge not according to the Appearance,
but judge righteous Judg-
ment.*



HIS excellent Piece of Advice was given by our Saviour to the *Jews* at the Feast of Tabernacles: and hath a particular Reference to two things (as you may observe from the preceding Context) viz. his Action of healing a Man on the Sabbath-day, for which the *Jews* reproached him; and the rash and wrong Judgment which they formed of his Character and Doctrine; for had they judged *righteous Judgment*, and not suffered them-

SERM. selves to be governed by the mere outward
 VIII. Appearance of things, they would not have
 been so much offended at that Action of his,
 and would evidently have seen that both He
 and his Doctrine came from God.

From these Words of our Saviour then we
 learn these two things.

- I. That Men are often deceived in their
 Judgment by external Appearances.
- II. If therefore we would form a right or
 righteous Judgment, we must take care
 to distinguish between the Appearance
 and Reality of Things.

Had the *Jews* done this, they had not
 been so fatally mistaken in their Opinion of
 Christ's Character in general, or of many of
 his Actions in particular. But their prejudi-
 ces against him inclined them to catch at
 every slight Appearance, or minute Circum-
 stance, to form Arguments, or draw Conclu-
 sions to his Disadvantage. Than which no-
 thing is more commonly practised now by
 Men who suffer their Minds to be prejudiced
 against those Persons and Things about which
 they form their Judgment; which renders
 it

it impossible for them, whilst they lie under that Prepossession to form a right one; for that will represent to them the weakest Probabilities as the strongest Arguments on the one Side, and the plainest proof as mere Fallacy on the other.

And as a prejudiced Man seldom judges right, so he always judges by Appearances; readily pronounces upon mere Probabilities, and believes or disbelieves a thing according as he would or would not have it to be true. Which is judging not by the *Understanding*, but the *Will*.

As Appearances then are so apt to deceive us, as Men are so prone to take the Shadow for the Substance, and are so often imposed upon by external Shew and superficial Views, the Caution and Precept which our Lord gives us in the Text appear to me in a Light of very great Importance, and as such demand our particular Attention. I shall therefore consider each of them distinctly.

I. Let us consider the Caution or negative Precept which our Lord gives us in the Text;
Judge not according to the Appearance.

The

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The Usefulness and Excellence of this Rule I propose to illustrate, by mentioning a few particulars to which it may be applied; and wherein Men are very apt to deceive themselves, and form a wrong Judgment of things by trusting too much to external Appearances.

1. It is by trusting too much to Appearance that Men are so often deceived in their Opinion of *Truth* and *Falshood*.

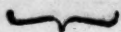
I speak not here of natural Truths, or the *Phænomena* and Events we meet with in the World of nature; of which, if a Man were to judge only by Appearances he would soon be carried very wide of the Truth, and be led into very palpable and ridiculous Mistakes. But what I mean is principally with regard to moral Truth; from which, if we take mere superficial appearance for our Guide, we are in great danger of being led astray; for appearances may, and often do, lie on one side, and truth on the other. Truth often puts on the Appearance of Falshood, and Falshood the Appearance of Truth; especially to hasty and undistinguishing Minds. I shall give you an Instance of each of these.

It

It is an allowed and established Truth, that necessarily flows from the Perfections of GOD, as the righteous Governor of the World, that under all the various Scenes of his Providence he takes a special care of the Interest of his faithful Servants, and will order all things for their Good. This Principle, I say, must be true. And yet the Appearance of things oftentimes lies very strong against it. Were we to confine our views only to the external Circumstances and Sufferings of good Men, we should be apt to think them deserted of Heaven; it would seem as if GOD had forsaken them, had no regard to their Interest, nor cared how it went with them; since they are often plagued, oppressed and afflicted more than other Men. In this case then Appearance lies on the wrong side; and were we to judge by it, we should receive that for Truth which the Word of GOD, and the Reason of things, concur to assure us, is a very great Mistake.

And as Truth may thus put on the appearance of Falshood, so Falshood may sometimes put on the Appearance of Truth. For Instance; it is undoubtedly a great Mistake to suppose, that GOD will punish any one
man

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man purely for the Sins of another. This never can be reconciled with the Attributes of his Nature; it represents him as an unrighteous Being, and *his ways as not equal*; and therefore it is impossible it should be true. And yet, were we to be governed by Appearances only, viz. those that offer themselves both in the Providences and the Word of God, we must receive this Doctrine as certain Truth; for in the course of his Providence there seem to be many things that favour it, and in his Word many things that assert it; as *Exod. xx. 5. Punishing the Iniquities of the Fathers upon the Children unto the third and fourth Generation of them that hate me.* And, *Jer. xxxii. 18. Thou recompenseth the Iniquity of the Fathers into the Bosom of their Children after them.* Yet notwithstanding these appearances of it's Truth, we are sure that notion is absolutely false; both because it carries in itself a heavy Impeachment of the divine Justice, and because God himself expressly disowns, rejects, and declares his Abhorrence of it, and assures us of the direct contrary, *Ezek. xviii. 20. The Soul that sinneth it shall die, the Son shall not bear the Iniquity of the Father, neither shall the Father bear the Iniquity of the Son.*

The Sins
of the Fathers
being visited
on children
in many
Instances.

So reconcile these 2 places the first 2. We must be considered in a national view this latter in a personal. our Lord considers his destruction of the Jews. who had filled up the measure of iniquity growing the further from him by killing the Lord of life & glory. so a nation is considered

2. We are in the same danger of being deceived by Appearances in forming our Judgment of *Good* and *Evil*. Children who are mostly under the Government of Sense and Fancy, we know, are often thus imposed upon: preferring a natural Evil because it has the Appearance of Good, and refusing a real Good because it appears to their Sense or Imagination as Evil. The same childish and injudicious Part do Men oftentimes act with regard to moral Good and Evil: and from the same Inducement too, the mere Appearances of things; or the force where-with some external Circumstances strike the Fancy or Imagination, and thereby pervert the Judgment. Hence it is that men so often mistake *Evil* for *Good*, and *Good* for *Evil*; call *Bitter* *Sweet*, and *Sweet* *Bitter*; put *Darkness* for *Light*, and *Light* for *Darkness* (a); become *wise* in their own *Eyes*, and *prudent* in their own *Sight* (b); and whilst they think they know any thing, know nothing yet as they ought to know (c).

I might easily multiply Instances under this head, but shall content myself with two very plain ones; one of which shews how
common

(a) Isai. v. 20. (b) Jer. 21. (c) 1 Cor. viii. 2.

as one person - but in a private person's view
the Son only bears his own iniquity - is personally
only punished: the Son may suffer affliction by
a natural & necessary consequence but it
can't be charged on God

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common a thing it is for Men to desire and pursue those things as good which are really evil, and the other how apt they are to reject and refuse those things as evil which are really good.

As to the first, what is a greater Evil than Sin ; whether we consider it in it's Nature, it's present Effects, or future Consequences? and yet there is nothing in which some Men take more Delight. And what is the reason that they delight in so destructive an Evil? but that it puts on the Appearance of Good, and thereby deceives them. There is no man can chuse Evil for itself, or under the notion of Evil : when it is chosen it is always under the Semblance of Good : and it is only the false Appearance of things, so favourable in this case to our corrupt Inclinations, that thus imposes upon us, and leads us to this wrong and wretched choice. Take any one Sin, for instance, to which some Men are addicted more than others, whether Pride, Drunkenness, Sensuality, Avarice, or the like, and you will find that it tempts them with the promise of some imagined Profit or Pleasure ; that is, it puts on the Appearance of
Good,

Good, and thereby easily gains their Consent. SERM.
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Again, deceived by the same false Appearances Men often reject that as evil which is really good. Else what is the reason that Multitudes so much neglect Religion, and some intirely reject it? when it is so certain that there can be no true Peace in this World, nor Happiness in the other without it: what is it, I say, but because it appears to their ill-biassed Judgment as evil? They take either a false or a partial View of it, look only on it's outside, or on some of it's Circumstances and Appendages, or on the wrong Representations which some Men make of it either by their Words or Actions; and from such false and disagreeable Appearances of it they become prejudiced against it. Whereas Religion, taken in it's proper nature, in a true and intire view, is the most delightful and most amiable thing in the World, and ought to be always so represented.

In like manner, take any particular Duty of Religion, as Prayer, for instance, whence is it that so many can content themselves to live in the neglect, or total disuse of so delightful

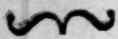
SERM. lightful and necessary an Act of religious
 VIII. Worship, but because their carnal Prejudices
 represent it to their Minds as disagreeable and
 burdensome ; and so under a pretence of the
 Difficulty of it, their Unfitness for it, or In-
 disposition to it, they satisfy themselves to
 continue in a constant or frequent Omission
 of it, to the danger of their Souls, the loss of
 their Peace, and the ruin of their Hopes.

And thus by the mere force of false Ap-
 pearances Men are apt to call Evil, Good ;
 and Good, Evil ; to form very wrong no-
 tions, and thence to fall into very wrong
 Practices in things of the greatest Import-
 ance. Which shews of how great weight
 and necessity is the Caution which our Lord
 gives us in the text, *Judge not according to
 the Appearance.*

3. In all Points of *Controversy* and *Debate*
 this Rule is of excellent Service. And in-
 deed if it were universally followed, that is,
 if Men did not take up with superficial
 views, were not too soon determined by bare
 Probabilities and Appearances, but would
 take pains and patience to go to the Bottom
 and search the Foundation of things, it would
 go a good way to make us all of one Mind,
 and

and banish all disputes out of the World. The cause and ground of our different Opinions then would be only the difference of our Abilities and Fitness for a critical Research. But as the case now stands, it often happens that Persons of the meanest Capacities by the help of a sincere Enquiry and an honest Heart, come directly at the Truth, whilst others of much greater Understanding and Knowledge, deceived by Prejudices and Appearances, wander farthest from it.

In all matters of Debate then we cannot have a more useful Motto to set before us than this of our text, *Judge not according to the Appearance.* Because by the arts of Controversy and false Colouring, Error may be set off so well, and made to appear so much like Truth, that it requires great Pains, Penetration, and Judgment, sometimes to distinguish the one from the other; to strip Error of it's false Ornaments, expose it in it's native Habit, and shew the real Difference between that and Truth. As on the other hand, Truth itself may, by the same artful Glosses and Misrepresentations, be made to look so much like Error, as to be often mistaken for it; and by some weak,

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undiscerning Minds, that judge only by Appearances, is sometimes actually rejected as such. And moreover either through Ignorance or Design, Truth and Error are sometimes so equally blended and mixed together, like the Chaff and the Wheat, that it is extremely difficult to sift or separate the one from the other. Which shews how necessary great Caution, Penetration and Judgment are in the right management of intricate Controversies; and how unfit they are to judge of, or decide them, who are unversed in the arts of Disputation, the nice methods of distinguishing, and the Rules whereby to judge between Argument and Sophistry. Every thing is not right, which, at first view, appears so to us; nor is every thing wrong which, at first sight, we may think to be so. This we often find in matters of Fact. And it is as certain and as common in matters of Speculation; wherein if we suffer ourselves to be governed and determined only by Appearances, we shall be as much deceived as the Boy was, who made haste to the top of a distant Hill, hoping then to touch the Skies, which *appeared* to him to rest upon it.

4. The

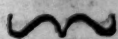
4. The same Rule is equally useful when we judge of the *Characters of Men*. For *here* also we are very apt to be deceived by Appearances; by which we are led to think too well of some, and as much too ill of others; according as external Appearances fall in with, and favour our Partiality for, or against the Person, whose Character we are judging of. For wherever there is this secret Bias of mind received before hand, it will readily catch at every Circumstance and Appearance to increase it: and by this means, without great care and guard upon ourselves, we may be led to form a very wrong Judgment of the true Characters of Men; than which hardly any thing is more common, whilst the reason of it is seldom attended to.

For instance, whilst we judge by Appearances only, we may be induced to entertain a less favourable Opinion of some than they really deserve. Some persons appear worse than they are; set the bad side of their Character most to view; whilst that which is truly good and valuable in them, lies more concealed, and hid from common Observation, and which (excepting some very inti-

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mate Friends) perhaps none are witnesses to, but God and their own Conscience. This Consideration should make us very cautious how we condemn Men in the gross; in which we can scarce fail of being mistaken. Not to say, that the mistake may be sometime owing to our own Ignorance or Prejudice. We soon see a Man's open Faults, but not so easily his secret Virtues; we know his outward Failings, but not his inward Sorrow for them; how much they are the Grief and Burden of his Heart, how much he mourns over them in the secret transactions between God and his own Soul; we abhor his Faults, but know not how much he abhors himself for them.

On the other hand, if we judge only by Appearances, we may be led to think too well of others. As the worst of Men are not without their Virtues, so the best of Men are not without their Faults. Every human Character hath it's Qualifications. And as some Men set the bad part of their Character most to view, and appear worse than they are, so others (and perhaps the most) put the best part of their Character foremost, and appear better than they really are.



are. We see their fervent Piety and strict Profession; we hear them express the warmest Concern for the interest of Christ, and the Good of Souls; and to talk even with Rapture on divine things; we admire their unwearied and undiscouraged Zeal in promoting a sense of Religion amongst men; and are ready hereupon to cry out,——“Surely
“there is something apostolical, or even angelical in such Men.” And doubtless there is a great Excellence and Beauty in a well-regulated Zeal. But still let us remember our Saviour’s Caution, *Judge not according to the Appearance, but judge righteous Judgment.* The most showy things are not always the most solid: nor does Religion consist altogether in Zeal and Affection. None of the Apostles had more Zeal than *Peter*, which did not secure him against the most shameful Fall. Let us consider what Humility, Lowliness and Meekness of Spirit they discover; what Gentleness, Moderation and Forbearance; what Government of their Passions; what freedom from Self-applause, Affectation and Vanity; what Mortification and Self-denial; what Prudence, Wisdom and Steadiness in their Conduct; what For-

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giveness of their Enemies; what Patience, Resignation, and Faith under Affliction; what fixed and steady regard to the Exercises of secret Devotion, and the Obligations of strict Virtue, Honesty, Justice and Charity in their Dealings and Converses with Men. These are some of the substantials of Religion; much more substantial than a flighty Zeal and warm Affections, which are oftentimes more owing to a natural Temper than a pious Principle. When these things attend a well-governed Zeal, they form a most excellent Character indeed, well worthy our Esteem and Imitation. But if upon a close view of things it appears, that the persons we are inclined to think so highly of, for the more showy parts of Religion are too defective (and perhaps more defective than many others) in these great, solid and substantial Branches of it, though they may in the general be good and well-designing Men, yet we may see reason to abate something of that very extraordinary Opinion, which others may have conceived of them, by precipitantly *judging according to the Appearance.*

5. This

of false Judgment.

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5. This Rule will be very useful for our Direction in judging of the *present State and Condition* of men; and when rightly applied will prevent or rectify many mistakes, which others are apt to fall into in this case, by judging only *according to the Appearance*. For instance, let us not call a man happy, purely because he is surrounded with Honour, Wealth and Affluence. His Pomp and Power can no more make him happy, than his laced Coat can make him healthy. If he lives under the tyranny of his Passions, and the Dominion of Vice, he is but a splendid Wretch; and notwithstanding all his gay and gaudy Appearance, is really miserable; and perhaps much more so than he would have been without it; because he is thereby exposed to more Temptations, Disappointments and Disquietudes than other Men are. For which reason it requires more Wisdom and Self-command to enjoy true Peace and Happiness in a high than a low Life.

On the other hand, let us not think that every man who makes a mean Appearance is miserable. We betray great Ignorance, if merely on that account we call him a *poor Wretch*. He may be poor, and yet not wretched;

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wretched; poor, and yet have Hope and Peace within; poor, and yet possessed of what the Apostle calls the greatest Gain, *Godliness and Contentment*. And as these compose the truest Happiness in this World, so they may be enjoyed in any condition of Life; and indeed are more likely to be found in a mean and low Station, than in the most exalted one; because the former is subject to the fewest Interruptions. Had Contentment and a good Conscience any necessary Connexion with Wealth, Avarice were a Virtue. But, alas! they are Jewels too precious to be purchased with Gold, and too substantial to be lost in Poverty.

That man then must be governed altogether by Appearances, and entirely neglect our Saviour's Rule and Advice, who esteems a person happy purely because he has a large possession of those things which can never make him so; and another unhappy, because he wants them.

Lastly, Let us remember to apply the same Rule in judging of our own *Character and State*. We are no less apt to be misled by Appearances in judging of ourselves than we are in judging of other men. It is seldom found
indeed

indeed that men judge too ill of themselves; though this has been the case of some meek-hearted, humble, timorous Christians; who are apt to see things in the worst Light, and to judge by the most melancholy Appearances. But the most common mistake by far is, for men to judge too well of themselves; to think they are sufficiently good, if they be not worse than some others, or than they themselves have ordinarily been, if they maintain the shew of Religion, and attend the duties of public Worship, if they have a competency of religious Knowledge, and a Talent of displaying that to the best Advantage. And thus from these *Forms* of Godliness they conclude they have the *Power* of it, though the Apostle tells us they are two very different things (*d*).

But these are only the Appearances of Religion: and if we take up with them, or judge of ourselves only by them, we shall be in danger of forming a very wrong and unrighteous Judgment, and deceive ourselves in matters of the highest Consequence.

Let us take the same rule with us in judging of our present State and Happiness.

Hath

SERM. Hath Providence been pleased to prosper us
VIII. in the World, and given us more than many
others? Do we live in Ease and Plenty
when others are oppressed with Want and
Penury? Let not our foolish Hearts deceive
us into a persuasion, that, on that account,
we are happier than our poorer Neigh-
bours. Because, for that very reason, we may
possibly be more unhappy than they. We
have certainly more to answer for. And
grievous will be our Condemnation, if, the
more we receive at the hand of God, we
regard him less. On the other hand, hath
Providence placed us in a lower rank of
Life? Are we obliged to earn our Bread by
the Sweat of the Brow? We mistake, if we
think ourselves less really happy on this Score.
We may fear, and serve God, and take care
of our Souls with fewer Interruptions, and
are exposed to much fewer Temptations,
than those who make a greater Noise and
Show in higher Life. We may be content
with mere necessary Food and Rayment, and
enjoy God, and Peace of Conscience, in a
Cottage. This is real Happiness; all the rest
is but the Shew of it.

Thus

of false Judgment.

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VIII.

Thus in several Instances have I endeavoured to illustrate the negative Precept in the text, and shewn you the great Extent and Usefulness of that Rule, which our Lord himself hath given us, for our guard against forming a wrong Judgment of things. That is, *not to trust too much to external Appearances.* I should now proceed to shew you what is comprehended in the positive Command, *but judge righteous Judgment.* But this I must reserve for the Subject of the next Discourse. And shall conclude this with two or three practical Remarks on what hath been said.

APPLICATION.

1. The design of these words of our Saviour, and of what hath been delivered from them, is not to lead men to Scepticism, or to persuade them to form no Judgment at all of things, but to put them on their guard against a prejudicate and rash Judgment; or to induce them to judge cautiously, and without Prejudice. It is by Appearances that men are generally deceived in their Judgment of things; and Prejudice always magnifies those Appearances; and sometimes most
enor-

SERM. enormously, beyond all Bounds of Truth and
 VIII. Reason ; and makes men judge of things just
 as a heated Fancy, a blind Appetite, or an un-
 governed Passion represents them.

Prejudice is to the mind what a *Calenture** is to the Eye. It discolours every Object, or exhibits it in a false light. It is the disease of the Understanding ; which makes it as unfit to judge aright of *Intellectual*, as a distempered Eye is to judge of *sensible* Objects. It creates false Appearances, and then judges by them.

The Mind without Prejudice indeed may be deceived in judging of Truths, as a sound Eye may in judging of Objects, by reason of the Position wherein, and the Medium through which it views them ; in which case we are obliged to call in the Assistance of our Reason and Understanding to correct it. So I say the Mind without Prejudice may be deceived by Appearances ; because from a certain Coincidence of Circumstances things may appear to be very different from what they really are ; or (as I observed before) Appearance

* A Distemper in the Eyes, said to be peculiar to Seamen ; whereby they imagine the Sea to be green Fields and under that Imagination will throw themselves into it, if not prevented.

ance or Probability may lie on one side, and Truth on the other. But when Prejudice is added at the same time to magnify those Appearances, or seeming Probabilities, and inclines the Mind immediately to judge by them, it leads it still farther from the Truth, which shews how necessary it is thoroughly to examine Appearances before we trust to them, and to divest ourselves of all Prejudices in forming our Sentiments of things, in order to *judge righteous Judgment.*

2. We hence see one chief reason of that great diversity of Sentiments there is amongst Men concerning the same Objects of Judgment. Some are perverted by Prejudices, others deceived by Appearances; and some have more Ability and Penetration to guard against the undue Influence of both. And as this arises, in a great measure, from the original make of the Mind, it follows that this diversity of Judgment hath its Foundation in some degree in our very Nature; and that it is no more possible for all Men, strictly speaking, to *think the same thing*, than it is for them to write the same Hand, or speak in the same Tone; and we can no more expect they should have just the same
Set

SERM. Set of Notions, than that they should have
VIII. just the same Set of Features.

But by the way, let it be remembered, that though we are all beset with Prejudices and false Appearances, which are apt to bias and betray the Judgment, yet it is very weak and criminal for a man to suffer himself to be misled and deceived thereby without any care to guard against them. Such Indolence is attended sometimes with the most pernicious Effects; and was the ground of that fatal mistake the *Jews* ran into with regard to our Saviour's Person and Doctrine. They were governed altogether by Prejudices and Appearances, took no care at all to arm themselves against the Influence of the one, and the deception of the other, and so were led to judge the most *unrighteous Judgment*.

3. I cannot but think likewise, that we may from hence, in a good measure, account for that Spirit of Infidelity that prevails so much in the present Age. The Motives and Reasons for which some Men reject the Gospel of Christ now, seem to be the very same for which the *Jews* rejected his Person and
Doctrine

Doctrine when he was upon Earth. I mean, because they will not be at the pains of examining matters impartially, but suffer themselves to be biaſſed by unreasonable Prejudices and superficial Appearances. Like the Jewish Priests, they scorn to think with the Vulgar; and seek to raise to themselves a Trophy of Wisdom on the Ruins of their Faith, and affect to be thought wiser than others, only on the merit of believing less: by which means they lose the Applause they laboured to secure, and diminish their Understanding just as much as they hoped to exalt it. So naturally does Vanity frustrate it's own End. However, under the Impulse of it, they readily imbibe every Prejudice, and fall in with every Appearance of Objection that lies against the truth of Christianity. Their Pride creates their Prejudices, and their Prejudices abuse their Reason. Hence they multiply Cavils against the plainest Principles, find Difficulties where others can see none, and magnify every Appearance of Difficulty into an unsurmountable Objection; upon which they triumph, and commence Champions in the Cause of Infidelity.

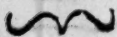
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SERM.
VIII.

In a word, just such Tempers and Dispositions had the *Pharisees* of old, as our present Set of Deists shew now. And had these lived at that time, they would doubtless have joined the same Cry against *Jesus, crucify him, crucify him*. The same treatment he met with from *those*, his Gospel now meets with from *these*; Ridicule, Abuse, and most unrighteous Outrage. To *those* our Saviour immediately directed the Advice in the text, as the best means to correct their Misunderstanding and false Judgment, pointing out to them at the same time the true Cause and Source of it. With a peculiar Propriety then are the Words applicable to their Followers in Infidelity in our day. And of great Service might it be to them to take this for their Motto, *Judge not according to the Appearance; but judge righteous Judgment.*

Lastly, As I have produced several Instances in which this Rule ought especially to be applied, let us remember now to take it with us, and make use of it in all those, and such like Cases: It is a Rule of greater Importance than we may at first imagine. And I am satisfied, the more we attend to it,

it, the more shall we be convinced of it's Excellence. To a neglect of it is owing the Prevalence of so many false notions and errors that spread abroad in the World, some of which have the most unhappy Influence on the Tempers and Practices of men. It is applicable in every case, and is of use in all. — How often have we been convinced of the necessity of it by Experience? How often have we found things to be otherwise than at first they appeared to be? And have seen reason to retract, and alter that Judgment which we have formed of things, by too rashly trusting to external Appearances? Truth sometimes lies deep, whilst *Errors, like Straws, upon the Surface flow.* — Let us take care of being precipitant either in our Applauses or Censures of men. If we judge by mere Appearances only, we may very easily be mistaken in both. — If it be asked then, what must we judge by, if not by Appearance? That Question I shall more particularly resolve, when I come to speak of the latter part of the Words, *Judge righteous Judgment.* In the mean time let it be remembered, that we are not hereby forbid to take any notice at all of Appear-

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pearances, but only not to trust too much to them. — Let us remember the same Rule likewise whenever we are called to form our Judgment of things, especially of things that relate to Religion. It will make us wiser, more solid, steady and judicious Christians. — Especially if any Duty appears to us disagreeable or difficult. If it be a plain, certain Duty, that is enough to determine us: the Appearance of things is not to govern us. — But what should recommend it above all, is the express Command of Jesus Christ himself; whom we profess to obey in all things, after which I need add nothing further to enforce it.



S E R-



S E R M O N IX.

R U L E S to form a Righteous J U D G M E N T.



J O H N vii. 24.

*Judge not according to the Appearance,
but judge righteous Judgment.*



I N these Words we have a double Precept; one negative, and the other positive. The negative Precept is, *Judge not according to the Appearance.* This I have already particularly handled; and opened to you the excellency of this Rule, by shewing you in several instances, how apt we are to be imposed upon, and led to form a wrong

SERM. Judgment by the mere *external Appearance*
 IX. of things; and in what cases this negative
 Rule is more especially to be applied.

I proceed now to the positive part of the Injunction, *Judge righteous Judgment*. In treating of which I propose,

- I. To consider the Importance of this Precept.
- II. What it contains; or how we are to form our Practice by it.

I. I am to consider the Importance of it.

This Command of Christ equally concerns *us* with those *Jews* to whom it was at first immediately delivered. And a Command of great Importance it is; whether we consider the Authority of him from whom it came, the Circumstances of those to whom it is given, or the necessary Consequences either of obeying, or neglecting it.

1. If we consider the Authority of him from whom it came; *viz.* *Jesus Christ* our divine Master, to whose Authority we are bound by the most solemn Obligations to submit, and whose Laws we acknowledge ourselves ready sincerely to obey. This is implied in
 our

our Christian Profession. It is not a distant consequence, or inference drawn from the obscure Words of Christ's Apostles, but a plain and express Precept of Christ himself; and which therefore in Duty to him we are obliged to make a Rule of Life; that is, to take care how we judge rashly, or determine precipitantly in any case whatsoever, and especially in Affairs that relate to Religion. A wilful neglect of this Rule is a wilful Contempt of the Authority of him who enjoined it: nor do we act a part consistent with the character of his Disciples and Followers, if when we know it to be his express Command, we pay it no more regard than if it were the Advice of an equal, or an inferior, whose Authority we do not acknowledge.

2. The importance of this Duty further appears, if we consider to whom this Command is given. The Persons to whom this Advice was immediately directed most certainly stood in the greatest need of it. No Men were more apt to form a rash and wrong Judgment of things (especially of those that concerned Religion) or were more apt to be misled by their native Prejudices

SERM. than the Jewish Priests and Pharisees. And
IX. if, by the Grace of GOD, and the Favour

of Providence in disposing of our Circumstances in Life, and the manner of our Education, we have a better Temper and Understanding than they, yet there is in all of us something of the same Pride, Darknefs and Prejudice, the same Carnality, Passion and Perverseness, which led them into the most fatal Mistakes. Which renders the Advice given immediately to them exceedingly proper, and pertinent to us; and in this view it may imply in it a Warning to us all, *also false* to beware of those evil Dispositions of Mind *conceptions* which betrayed them into the most dangerous *of Religion* Misapprehensions and Mistakes, concerning Christ's Person, Character and Conduct. *of providence*

3. The importance of this Precept further appears by considering the mischievous Consequences of neglecting it. All the miseries of Mankind arise from their Sin and Error; and all their Sin and Error from a wrong Practice, in pursuance of a wrong Judgment. Whence arose all that enormous Heap of Errors maintained at this Day by the Church of *Rome*, but from this Source?

They

They first formed rash and wrong determinations in their several Councils (for all their boasted Infallibility could never yet prevent this) then stamped those Decrees with the Seal of *Orthodox Truth*, and established them as certain Rules of *Catholic Faith*, from which they were never to depart. And by this means the grossest Errors have been maintained and enforced as the greatest Truths, and the best Religion in the World perverted, disfigured, abused and transformed into the very worst. All which might with ease have been prevented, only by stedfastly adhering to our Saviour's Advice as their Rule, *Judge not according to the Appearance, but judge righteous Judgment.*

4. No less happy will be the Consequence, if we observe it, than miserable if we neglect it. It would preserve us from many false Notions and bad Practices which now obtain in the World. In short, were this Advice universally followed, there would be but few Disputes left among Christians. We should all of us most certainly unite in the great things of Christianity, and should differ very peaceably in those little things

SERM. which it is no great matter whether we agree
 IX. in or no. We should live more comfortably
 and usefully in this World, and have more
 settled Hopes of Happiness in the other.
 For the common Source of our Doubts and
 Fears, is either a mistaken notion of the
 terms of Salvation, or a wrong Practice arising
 from some other mistake.

Of so great Importance is the Rule which
 our Saviour lays down in the text, I proceed
 now,

II. To shew what Use we are to make
 of it, or how we are to form our Practice
 by it.

Here I propose to lay before you several
 Directions that are either included in, or necessary
 to a right Application of it. And,

I. Before we judge of any thing, we
 should consider our own Ability to judge of
 it, whether it falls within the compass of our
 Understanding; or whether we have that
 previous Knowledge of other things which
 is necessary to qualify us to form a right
 Judgment. If not, the matter does not belong
 to us, it is not cognizable in our Court,
 and we have nothing to do with it. Or if
 we

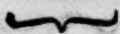
we must needs settle our Judgment in such things, we should take our Sentiments from those persons who are most capable of judging of them, and who are men of such approved Probity and Understanding, that it is not likely they should either deceive us or be deceived themselves.

There is a deal of this implicit or second-hand Knowledge among Men. And it cannot be otherwise. But then persons should not be forward to boast or make a shew of such kind of Knowledge, but retain it with modesty and diffidence. Because they still lie liable to be confounded, if not confuted, by the Arguments of those who have studied such matters more than they; and to be perplexed and non-plussed by Objections which perhaps they never heard of. This I think is a wise and right Conduct, and the best way to prevent a wrong and erroneous Judgment in those things of which we are not capable of judging from our own immediate Knowledge. And if it would not prevent all Error in such cases, it would however prevent persons from being positive and presumptuous in their Errors, which is no inconsiderable Acquisition. *Solomon* hath

set

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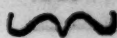


set a brand of Folly on that Man who exposes his own Ignorance, by his forwardness to give his Opinion in every point whether he understand it or not. *A Fool (saith he) uttereth all his mind, but a wise Man keepeth it in till afterward (a). Every prudent Man dealeth with Knowledge, but a Fool layeth open his Folly (b).*

2. If it be concerning an Action or Event related by another that you are to judge, be first sure that it is matter of Fact. For if upon proper Search you find it hath no Foundation in truth, you have nothing to do with it; and if you are not sure it hath, you ought to suspend your Judgment, however strong an Inclination you may have to believe and judge. But be sure you never suffer either your Assent or Judgment to be biaſſed by the positive or dogmatical Airs of an uncharitable Tale-Bearer. Before we give Credit to a Report we must always examine the Authority on which it is built, and consider the Character of him that relates it. If he is a Man of a weak and credulous Mind, of a superstitious or slanderous Cast, he certainly deserves not an equal degree

(a) Prov. xxix. 11.

(b) Prov. xiii. 16.



degree of Credit with one of Moderation, Understanding and sound Judgment. And a careful Attention to this single Rule, to examine well the matter of Fact before we proceed to judge of it, would be a means of preventing much of that unreasonable and unrighteous Judgment which some so readily pass upon men and things, to the great Prejudice of Truth and Religion.

3. Before we can rightly judge of any thing, we must acquaint ourselves with the true state of the Case, and lay together all the material Circumstances on both sides, whether it be a matter of Fact or Sentiment. Unless we understand the true state and circumstances of the Case, it is impossible the Judgment should determine any thing about it. Because these are it's materials to work upon, or the Marks by which to trace out Truth.

For instance, if it be an *Action* about which we are to judge, we must consider the Place where, the Time when, the Person by whom, the Manner wherein, and the Motives by which, that Action was performed. By a careful Attention to all which Circumstances the Guilt of a bad Action may

SERM. may sometimes appear to be really much
 IX. less, and at other times much greater, than
 it is generally taken to be in the Opinion of
 superficial and ill-judging Men. And by
 the same method, some good Actions may
 appear to be indeed much better than they
 are commonly thought; and others not so
 good. Thus the Contribution of the poor
 Widow's Mite, was a more heroic Act of
 Charity in itself, and in the Eye of our Savi-
 our, than it was in the Eyes of others. But
 the long, formal Prayers of the Pharisees,
 and their punctilious exactness in Ceremo-
 nies, were much less esteemed by *him* than
 other Men. The reason is the same in both
 cases, they *judged by outward Appearance*,
 and he *judged righteous Judgment*.

But if it be a matter of *Sentiment* about
 which we are to judge, we must endea-
 vour clearly to understand the Terms of
 the Proposition in which it is contained, the
 nature of the Evidence on which it is built,
 the Arguments brought to prove it, the Ob-
 jections made against it, and the difference
 between the Weight of the Arguments on
 one side, and of the Objections on the
 other. The difference, I say, of their *Weight*
 not

not of their *Numbers*: For one weighty, solid Argument or Objection, which carrieth plain Evidence, or strong Conviction with it, should have more Influence upon us than twenty weak or distant ones, though dressed up with the utmost Art, or urged with the greatest Zeal.

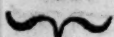
4. Would we judge *righteous Judgment*, we must by all means divest ourselves of those bad Dispositions which lead us to form a wrong one. Especially these three, *Pride*, *Passion*, and *Party-prejudice*.

Pride prompts us to adhere stiffly to all our preconceived Sentiments, right or wrong; blinds the Eye of the Mind, and bars the Heart against the Entrance of Conviction and new Light, under a false notion, that it is a shame for a Man to be found in an Error, and a fickleness to alter his first Judgment. This puts a stop to all Improvements in true Knowledge, gives him a contempt of all Opinions but his own, and renders him impatient of examining any to the Bottom.

Passion puts the mind into a Hurry and Ferment; and whilst it continues under that disorder, it is as incapable of judging or distinguishing

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tinguishing between Truth and Falshood, Right and Wrong, as the Palate is of distinguishing Tastes when the Body is in a high Fever. So that a Man in a Passion should never believe his own Thoughts; because they will always make a false Representation of things to the Mind.

Party-prejudice is another thing that strongly perverts the Judgment. For how can that man expect to form a *righteous Judgment*, who is resolved to form none but that which his Party hath formed already for him; to which he is, at all Events, determined to adhere? This is so far from permitting him to *judge righteous Judgment*, that it will not so much as suffer him to *examine*, in order to form any Judgment at all; nor to consider the Foundation of his own Notions, or of theirs who differ from him. Such a man, instead of *trying all things, and bolding fast that which is good*, tries nothing, but *bolds fast* that which he hath first seized on, good or bad.

Persons that are governed by such Dispositions as these can pay no due regard to this Rule of our Saviour: And if we would put it into Practice, we must not only guard
against

against these irregular Affections, but endeavour to cultivate the contrary ; Humility, Meekness, an Openness to Conviction, and a sincere Desire to receive and embrace the Truth *as it is in Jesus* where ever we find it.

5. It may help us to form a right Judgment of things, to consider the natural Consequences and general Tendency of them. If, for instance, we find that any particular Practice we allow, be the frequent occasion of Sin, by leading us to a neglect of Duty, or Formality in it, or by tempting us to act out of Character, or by exposing us to bad Company, and bad Examples, which endanger the Peace and Purity of the Mind, that Practice, I say, if it be not unavoidable, appears by this it's bad tendency to be unlawful. So if any particular Doctrines are plainly dishonourable to some or other of the divine Perfections, or have a direct tendency to induce and countenance Licentiousness, Carnality, and Pride, we may be sure they are not the Doctrines of the Gospel, because these do all exalt the honour of every divine Attribute and tend to make us holy, spiritual and humble. But whatever

SERM. ever Practices or Doctrines have a visible
 IX. tendency to improve the divine Life in our
 Souls, and make us more holy, humble and
 heavenly, those we may safely pronounce to
 be right and agreeable to the Will and Word
 of GOD.

6. To form a righteous Judgment we must be sure to judge by a right Rule, and take care not to mistake it. In all matters of Religion, the only Rule we have to go by is the Word of GOD: To which all Parties refer as the Source and Test of their religious Principles; from whence they profess to take them, and by which they are content to try them. To this then must we steadily adhere in opposition to all other Tests and Standards devised by Men.

But we must not only adhere to it, but take care to understand it. For a Rule, though ever so good in itself, can be of no service to us till it be well understood; it may otherwise be the means of leading us out of the right Way; and not only so, but of making us confident in the wrong. We must therefore, according to our Saviour's own Direction, *search the Scriptures (c)*; that

(c) John v. 39.

that is, diligently examine and compare one Scripture with another: a particular Advice very necessary to be followed, in order to practise that general one he gives us in the Text, to *judge righteous Judgment.*

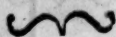
And that we may come at a right Understanding of Scripture Phrases, there is another Rule I would especially recommend, *viz.* not to take up with any sense that may *possibly* be put upon them, but to seek for that sense or meaning that was *originally* intended by them; to which the Context, with the general Scope and Design of the Author's Argument, will for the most part readily direct us.

And whatever Doctrine we see to be plainly contained in Scripture, often inculcated there, and represented in various Lights as a matter of Importance, by *that* let us resolve to abide as a principle of divine Truth, though undiscoverable by the light of Nature, and denied and opposed by those who have accustomed themselves to go by other Rules, in matters of Religion, than that of the holy Scriptures.

7. After all this care and caution to trace out Truth, it becomes us at last to be very

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modest (especially in matters that are intricate and difficult) and to give our Judgment with Diffidence, rather than Confidence. Because, after all, we may possibly be mistaken, by the force of some latent Prejudice, by a misconstruction of some ambiguous Word, or an Inattention to some important Circumstance. Our own Experience may convince us that we are not infallible: We have been mistaken when we have thought ourselves very sure; and that perhaps in matters of much less difficulty than those we are now speaking of; which should teach us modestly to distrust our own Judgment, and to guard against the same Self-deception for the future.

Lastly, If we would *judge righteous Judgment*, we must be frequent and earnest in our applications to the throne of Grace; that the *Father of Lights* would remove our Darkness, Prejudice, and Carnality; give us a sound and regular Understanding in the things of GOD, pour divine Light into our Minds, rectify our Misapprehensions, lead us into a saving Knowledge of divine things, that we may receive *the Truth as it is in Jesus*, and hold it fast *in Love*, and not in *Unrighteousness*;

ness; and in *his Light* we shall see *Light*. For after all the Precaution and Care we can take, we are still such frail and fallible Creatures, so prone to Pride, Passion and Prejudice, that without his Illumination and Grace, we shall soon be lost in Darkness and Error, receive false Impressions of him, and his ways, embrace wrong Notions for true, and perhaps pride ourselves in them, to the great disturbance of our Peace, and the prejudice of our Souls. However, if there be a sincere and unfeigned Desire to know and do the whole Will of GOD, he will not impute to us our involuntary Errors and Frailties, for he *considereth our Frame*.

These things I apprehend, are implicitly contained in our Saviour's Precept: and thus must we act if we would, according to his Command, *judge righteous Judgment*.

Let us make hereupon the following short Reflexions.

1. This same Rule which hath now been explained to us with reference to Religion, may be of great service to us in common Life: *Judge not according to the Appearance, but judge righteous Judgment*, Appearances

SERM.

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often deceive, and mislead us in the secular as well as the religious Life. We do not always find things turn out as they promise, nor persons always to be what they appear. Some we see are much better, others much worse than we apprehended. There is a general Disguise thrown on the Face of the World; we live among false Appearances; almost all Men have their Vails and Vizards, which they take off, or put on, in different Companies, and on different Occasions; Characters are personated, Sentiments concealed, Words are studied, Actions forced, and Passions guarded: So that very few Persons really are just what they appear to be in the Eye of the World: The most free and open not excepted; who often conceal themselves by acquired Ease and affected Frankness; as effectually, though more agreeably, than others do by Silence, Reserve and Stiffness. Which shews the Uncertainty of judging by Appearances only.

The same may be said with respect to the Reasons and Motives of our own Conduct in any particular Instance, which often appear to us much stronger, or much weaker, than they really are, according as we are bi-
assed

a righteous Judgment.

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biased by some secret Principle or Passion to
or against the Action itself.

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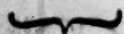
IX.

2. We hence see one great Excellency of the Christian Religion. It appeals to the Reason and Understanding of Men, as the divine Author of it himself did. It is not ashamed to be searched and examined; it does not decline the severest Scrutiny. All it demands is a fair Trial: It calls upon Men to use all the Reason GOD hath given them to judge of it, and it's Doctrines. It only desires them not to abuse that Reason; nor suffer it to be imposed upon, and deluded by external Shew and false Appearances, or cramped by Prejudice, Partiality and Passion. It speaks to it's greatest Enemies in the Words of the Text, in which Christ spake to his, — “*Judge righteous Judgment*, and “I am not afraid to stand by your Determinations.”

It is doing great Disservice to the Cause of Religion, to represent it at variance with Reason. Religion is the highest Improvement of Reason; and Christianity the most reasonable Institution in the World. And there is no Man that impartially uses his

SERM. reason, but must be a Friend to it. And

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it is no wonder that they, who renounce or abuse their Reason, should be it's Enemies ; because it is that alone that discovers the Beauty, Harmony, and Excellency of it. Were but our modern Infidels for once to take our Saviour's Advice, and judge of his Religion in the same manner as he desired the Pharisees to judge of his conduct, that is, to set aside Prejudices and false Appearances, and impartially use their Reason, in order to form a *righteous judgment*, I am persuaded they would soon become it's Friends.

Let us not be afraid of Reason in Religion. Religion itself is not afraid of it. All that we have to fear is the abuse or misuse of our Reason. And that is all that it cautions us against. Which Caution from our Saviour's own Mouth hath now been urged upon us. Rational Piety is the Beauty and Perfection of Christianity. A regular Judgment, and serious Temper, make a finished Christian. Plainly to see the Ground we go upon, and keep it; rightly to know the Foundation of our Hope and Faith, and to

re-

retain them; to have a clear Head and a pious Heart, distinct Conceptions of what we believe and profess, plain Evidence of the Certainty and Importance thereof, with a steady and inflexible Adherence thereunto. — This is the Beauty, this the Perfection of the Christian Character.

3: We may hence discern the probable Source of most of that Uncharitableness and Cenforiousness we see in the World. Superficial Judgment begets Error, and Error begets Bigotry, which always inclines Men to a bitter and persecuting Spirit. The Romish Church, which is the most erroneous, is by far the most persecuting Church in the Christian World. Passion and Persecution are always a sign of a bad Cause. A good Cause wants neither of them: Religion and Truth disclaim them both. Let us only take care to judge righteous Judgment, and that will dispose us to a charitable Temper.

Lastly, When by divine Grace, and the Help of the forementioned Rules, we come to form a better Judgment of things, let us immediately form our Practice by it. For

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Instance, If by this means we are more than ever convinced of the Vanity and Uncertainty of all our Earthly Comforts, let us be more careful to abstract our Affections from them: If we find that we have hitherto entertained some wrong Sentiments of Religion, and the Ways of GOD, let us immediately quit them for those which we now plainly see to be more agreeable to his Nature and Word: If we are now sensible of the Necessity and Importance of some one particular Duty, which we have too much neglected, let us, in the Name of GOD, resolve for the future to be more diligent in the Performance of it: If we are now aware, that such and such Company, or Occurrences, are Temptations and Snares to us, let us as much as may be avoid them: If by being better informed in the nature of Religion, we see something in our Temper or Conduct very faulty and inconsistent with it, let us forthwith set ourselves, by divine Grace, to regulate and amend it,

Thus shall our Improvements in Goodness keep pace with our Progress in Knowledge;

ledge; thus shall we grow in Grace as we advance in Understanding; and by both be more and more prepared and fitted for that State of Light, Felicity, and Bliss, which is the final Object of all our highest Wishes.

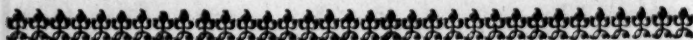
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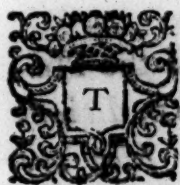
The PRAYER of the PHARISEE
and the PUBLICAN.



LUKE xviii. 10—13.

*Two Men went up into the Temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a Publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself,—“GOD, I thank thee, that I
“am not as other Men are, Ex-
“tortioners, Unjust, Adulterers,
“or even as this Publican. I
“fast twice in the Week, I give
“Tithes of all that I possess.”
And the Publican standing afar
off,*

*off, would not lift up so much as his Eyes unto Heaven: But smote upon his Breast, saying,—“ GOD
“ be merciful to me a Sinner.”*



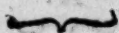
HIS Parable was spoken by our Saviour for the Instruction of a certain sort of Persons, *who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others*; as the preface to it informs us, *ver. 9.* The Design of it was to shew, that *every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted*; as we learn from our Saviour's own Application of it, *ver. 14.*

Two Persons of very different Characters, a Pharisee and a Publican, addressed themselves to the Duty of Prayer, at the same time, and place, *viz.* the Temple. We are told in what manner each of them prayed, and the different Success they met with. The Parable itself is so plain, that, I think, nothing can be said to make it more so.

What I propose, is to make some general Observations on the different manner in which

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which these two persons prayed, and then improve this instructive passage of Scripture with some practical Remarks.

I. I shall make some general Observations on the different manner in which these two Persons prayed. And,

1. Let us consider the Prayer of the Pharisee. Which was this—"GOD, *I thank thee, that I am not as other Men are, Extortioners, Unjust, Adulterers, or even as this Publican; I fast twice in the Week, I give Tithes of all that I possess.*"

This Prayer, you see, (if we may call it so) is exactly in the Character of those Persons for whose Admonition this Parable was intended; that is, the Pharisees, *who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.* And that this Pharisee did so, appears from his very Prayer. "*I fast twice a Week, I give Tithes of all I possess;*" there is his Self-righteousness, and his Boast of it. And, "*I thank GOD that I am not as other Men, nor as this Publican,*" shews how much *he despised others.*

But to consider this Prayer of the Pharisee more particularly,

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1. There is much Self-confidence in it.

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He stood and prayed thus with himself. Or,

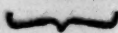
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as some render it, *he stood by himself*, (at a distance from the profane Publican, in some conspicuous Place, where he might be seen by others) *and prayed thus.* "GOD, I thank thee, that I am not as other Men are."

What a bold assuming Air is this, with which to come into the presence of the great GOD! And after this general Self-applause, he descends to particulars; that he was no *Extortioner*, no *Adulterer*, &c. Nay, his Righteousness was not negative only, but positive. And he mentions some particulars also of that sort. *I fast twice in the Week*; as the Pharisees were wont to do, viz. on *Monday* and *Thursday*. *I give Tithes of all that I possess.* Indeed he thanks GOD for this; but it is in such a manner as plainly shews, he thought the Thanks due to himself; and is a Language and Temper very different from that of the Apostle *Paul*, when he said, *by the Grace of GOD I am what I am.* His words express no real thankfulness of Heart for the Grace of GOD that had made the difference between him and others; but have evidently the Air of an arro-

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arrogant and ostentatious Hypocrite. *I am not so bad as others, I thank God.* When at the same time, it is plain that all he meant was Self-applause.

2. There appears a good deal of secret Pride in this Address.

He was fully persuaded that he was more holy than other Men, and upon that grows mighty fond of himself. The particular Detail of his good Works shews the vanity of his Heart. He boasts of this, and dwells with pleasure on the Subject. As if all his Business at the Temple was, to tell Almighty God how good he was; like those Hypocrites mentioned, *Isai. lviii. 3. Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not.* Here is not the least Expression of any sense he had either of his wants or his Sins. His Pride had made him blind to both.

3. He not only discovers much Pride but great Ignorance.

For supposing all the many good things he here says of himself were true, it amounts to no more than this, That he was no profligate, or openly profane Sinner, but that he conformed to some of the

the

the external Modes of Religion. Which he might do, and yet be a bad Man; by indulging *Iniquity in his Heart*; as Malice, Envy, Pride, Covetousness, Hatred, Ambition, Hypocrisy, and Worldliness. And however fond he was of the *Forms*, he might still be a stranger to *the Power, of Godliness*. For it is great Ignorance to think, that Religion consists only in doing no Body any harm, and observing a few external Rites; in which this Pharisee placed all his Religion.

4. There is much Hypocrisy in this Prayer.

Hypocrisy consists in a person's affecting to appear more religious than he really is. And it is always a shrewd Sign of it, when there is an over-eager Zeal for the Formalities and Circumstantials of Religion; which this Prayer of the Pharisee shews to be exactly his Character.

5. It shews him to be at the same time very uncharitable and censorious.

There was but one Man in the World that he seemed to have a good Opinion of, and that was himself. *I thank God, that I am not as other men are.* He speaks indefinitely

SERM. nitely as if he thought himself better than

X. *any other Men.* How came he to know
 what other Men are? or even that poor
 Publican whom he marks as the particular
 Object of his Contempt. For by the
 Words *Extortioner*, and *Unjust*, he seems
 to cast an oblique Glance upon this Pub-
 lican's supposed Character. He knew him
 to be a Publican, and thence concluded that
 he was an Extortioner, an unjust Man, and
 all that was bad. But supposing it had
 been so, and he knew it, what occasion
 had he to take notice of it in his Prayer?
 Could he not address himself to his Maker
 without reproaching his Fellow-worship-
 per? But he looked upon this Publican's
 supposed Wickedness to be a Foil to his
 own fancied Righteousness. He therefore
 sets them in Contrast that the latter may
 appear with the greater Lustre. So close-
 ly are Pride and Censoriousness linked to-
 gether.

Lastly, The last Observation I shall make
 on this Address of the Pharisee is, that there
 is not one Word of Prayer in it.

He *went up to the Temple to pray*, but for-
 got his Errand. He was so full of him-
 self

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self, and of his own Righteousness, that he seems to think that he needed nothing; for he prays for nothing; not so much as the Grace and Favour of GOD, of his want of which he appears to be not at all sensible.

I shall conclude my Observations on this part of the Text with taking notice, how exactly this Prayer corresponds with the Character of the Pharisees, as delineated in other parts of the Gospel; who loved to pray, that they might be seen of Men; who devoured Widows Houses, and, for a pretence, made long Prayers; who paid Tithe of Mint, Anise, and Cummin; but neglected the weightier matters of the Law; who strained out (a) a Gnat, and swallowed a Camel; who appeared outwardly righteous to Men, but within were full of Hypocrisy and Iniquity; as they are described by our Saviour in the xxxiii. Chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel.

Let us now turn to the Prayer of the Publican, which was just the Reverse of this; as full of Humility and Self-abase-

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ment,

(a) So the original Word (*διυλίζοντες*, *percolantes*,) should be rendered; to sift or strain out through a Searce or Cullender.

SERM. ment, as the other was of Pride and Self-
X. confidence.

He stood afar off, and would not so much as lift up his Eyes to Heaven, but smote upon his Breast and said, "GOD, be merciful to me " a Sinner."

1. We may observe the Seriousness and Humility of this Prayer.

This is expressed by the Gesture in which he addressed himself to this Duty. *He stood afar off.* The Pharisee stood, but crowded up as far as he could to the upper end of the Court. The Publican, from a sense of his Unworthiness to draw near to GOD, kept at a distance. And even there *he would not so much as lift up his Eyes to Heaven.* He lifted up his Heart to GOD in Heaven, but, oppressed with shame and sorrow, he cast down his Eyes to the Earth. His dejected Looks spake a dejected Heart. *His Iniquities had taken hold upon him, as a heavy Burthen, so that he was not able to look up (b).*

2. Observe the Earnestness of this Prayer. It hath few Words, but much pious Fer-

(b) Psalm. xl. 12.

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Fervour. *He smote on his Breast, saying, "GOD, be merciful to me a Sinner."* Such words, uttered with such an Action, and such an Emphasis as is natural to them, must come from a Heart filled with a deep sense of Sin, and an earnest Desire of pardon.

3. We may observe the penitential Sorrow and Compunction of mind denoted by these Words.

This Prayer of the Publican is very short. Sighs and Tears prevent his utterance, Grief and Confusion choak up his words. But what he did say was much to the Purpose. *GOD, be merciful to me a Sinner!* as if he had said, — "*Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee!* Yes, I am that great Sinner I have been so often called. But, O that I might obtain Mercy! This is all I want and ask; and without it I am undone for ever."

The Pharisee knew not that he was a Sinner. He could see the Sins of others fast enough, but not his own. He was *clean and pure from Sin*. But the humble, self-condemning Publican could give himself no

SERM. other Character than that of a Sinner; a
X. criminal Convict at the Bar of GOD.

4. We may observe the Faith that was mixed with his Repentance and Humiliation.

Though he was sensible he was a great Sinner, yet not too great to be pardoned. His faith and hope in the pardoning Mercy of GOD, encouraged him to put up this Petition. And had he been acquainted with the great Doctrine of Atonement by *Jesus Christ*, his Faith would doubtless have pleaded that with equal Importunity. The Pharisee pleads the Merit of his Fasting and Tithes; but the Publican depends only on free Grace. Flies to mercy as the *City of his Refuge*; as if he had said, "The Law "condemns me, Justice pursues me, nothing "can save me but *Mercy, Mercy.*"

Lastly, We may observe the Comprehensiveness of this Prayer.

In these four words (for there is no more in the Original) are comprized the three great parts of Prayer, *Invocation, Petition, and Confession*. He calls upon GOD, confesses himself a Sinner, and then puts up an importunate Petition suitable to that Character.

rafter. O GOD, be merciful to me a Sinner !

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And having thus particularly considered the Difference between the Prayer of the Pharisee and that of the Publican, it remains now,

II. To make some practical Remarks on the whole for our own Improvement.

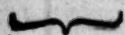
I. Then from what hath been said upon this Passage of Scripture, we see the reason why *the Sacrifice of the Wicked is an Abomination to the Lord.*

It is expressly said to be so, *Prov. xv. 8.* and especially his Prayers, *Prov. xxviii. 9.* And the reason of it is plainly this. Because he *offers it with a wicked Mind*; or a Heart in Love with Iniquity, and full of Pride, Hypocrisy, Malice, Self-confidence, Dissaffection to GOD, and Contempt of others. Which are sometimes discovered even in his very Prayers; as they were in this of the Pharisee.

When a person prays to GOD with a Heart habitually set against him, and fully bent on Sin, how can the pure and holy GOD, who sees through every Vail and

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Disguise, but abhor such hypocritical Offerings? Suppose such an Address were made to an earthly Prince, by a Subject known to be in open Rebellion against him; who, instead of confessing his Guilt, and imploring Pardon, should present him with a petulant, haughty Petition, which either in the matter or manner of it, discovered that he still retained and indulged a malignant, hostile temper against him; would not such a Prince take it as the highest Indignity that could be offered him? And why should Sinners imagine they may mock the Almighty with more Safety and Impunity, than they can their earthly Sovereign? This is the very same Remonstrance which GOD himself made to his People the Jews in the same case, *Mal. i. 7, 8. Ye offer polluted Bread upon my Altar, and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? And if ye offer the blind for Sacrifice, is it not evil? And if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy Governour, will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy Person? saith the Lord of Hosts. If I indulge Iniquity in my Heart, saith David, the Lord will not bear me (c).*

This,

(c) Psal. lxi. 18.

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This, like a *dead Fly in the Ointment*, spoils the Savour of all our most precious Offerings (d). SERM. X.

That Scripture therefore, *The Sacrifice of the Wicked is an Abomination to the Lord*, is greatly mistaken, when it is supposed to mean, that all the best Services and Prayers, performed by Persons before they are actually in a state of *Conversion*, are abominable in the Sight of GOD. For, considering the great Difficulty of adjusting the exact point of Conversion, and the precise time of it, (both which, for the most part, are extremely uncertain) such a Construction of that Text would throw a mighty Barden on tender Consciences, and be a constant discouragement to them in the way of their Duty. Whereas the true Sense of it appears to be no more than this, that when there is a prevailing love for Sin in the Heart, and Men keep on in a Course of praying, with a secret and resolved purpose to keep on in a Course of Sinning, and even discover that Iniquity of their Hearts in their very Prayers; such Prayers for certain are, and cannot but be highly offensive and hate-

about
difference
between
a resolved
sinner
and
one who
is alone
for sin
by his pray-
ers. - a
humble
penitent
sinner

R 4

ful

(d) Eccl. x. 1.

SERM. ful to a GOD of Holiness, Purity, and
 X. Truth. And such was the Prayer of the
 Pharisee.

2. We hence also see the reason why
 the *Prayer of the Upright is God's De-*
light (e).

And this is as plainly exemplified in the
 Prayer of the Publican. Which was that
 INWROUGHT Prayer which, the Apostle
James tells us, *availeth much*, *Jam. v. 16.*
 What success it met with, we are told in
 the verse immediately following the Text.
I tell you, this Man went down to his House
justified rather than the other. And such se-
 rious, humble, fervent, faithful, penitent
 Prayers will never fail of Success. And the
 reason why they prevail so much with GOD,
 is, because he taketh delight in them. And
 the Reason why he taketh delight in them
 is, because they proceed from a humble,
 upright Heart. *The Sacrifices of GOD are*
a broken Spirit: A broken and a contrite
Heart, O GOD, thou wilt not despise (f).
 This is a form of Speech in which much
 more is understood than expressed. *Will not*
despise; that is, he greatly loves, esteems,
 and

(e) Prov. xv. 8.

(f) Psal. li. 17.

more
 acceptable
 (in prayr)
 so he
 more
 approved
 by God

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and honours such. As he himself declares in *Isai.* lxvi. 2. *Thus saith the Lord, the Heaven is my Throne, and the Earth is my Footstool; where is the House that ye build unto me, and where is the Place of my rest? for all those things hath my hand made, and all those things have been saith the Lord; but to this man will I look, even unto him that is poor and of a contrite Spirit, and that trembles at my Word.* And to the same Purpose, *Isai.* lvii. 15.

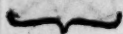
So that it is the Humility and Sincerity of the Heart, that makes the Prayer of the Upright so pleasing in the Sight of GOD; and it is the Pride and Hypocrisy of the Heart that makes the prayer of Sinners an Abomination to him. This latter evidently appears in the Prayer of the Pharisee, and the former in the Prayer of the Publican. And therefore *this went down to his House justified rather than the other (g).*

Hence

(g) i. e. *And not the other.* For as an absolute Form of Speech is frequently in Scripture put for a comparative one (*Hof.* vi. 6. *1 Cor.* vii. 7. *1 Tim.* i. 9. *1 Pet.* iii. 3;) so a comparative Form is often put for a negative absolute, e. g. *Psal.* cxviii. 8. *Prov.* xxv. 7. *Matth.* xviii. 8. *1 Cor.* vii. 9. *Vid. Glassii. Philol. sacr. pag. 465, 979.*

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Hence also we may see the Difference between the Prayers which saint *Paul* put up when he was a jewish Zealot and that which he uttered when he became a christian Profelyte; and the reason why so much notice is taken of this in the *Acts* of the *Apostles*. For when the Lord sent *Ananias* with a Message to him, he says, *Acts* ix. 11. *Arise, and go into the Street which is called Strait, and enquire in the House of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold he PRAYETH.* *Saul*, before this, had been of the Sect of the *Pharisees*, who were famous for their long and frequent Prayers. But all that, we see, is placed to no account. He never prayed to any purpose, or as he ought, till now. Before, his Prayers were dead and formal; now, they are lively and fervent; before, he prayed to be seen of Men; now, to be heard of GOD; before, he prayed as a self-righteous Bigot, now, as a self-convicted Sinner; before, he prayed like the *Pharisee*, now, like the *Publican*.

3. We may hence observe, that amongst the Worshipers of GOD in his visible Church here below, there is always a mixture of Good and Bad.

I can't conceive
St Paul was
like this
Pharisee
in the text
who such
himself as
longing to
be known
blameless as
the best
of it and yet
how high he
and would
good con
sincerely
God. tho' it

he could gain was lost. The Pursueth of his
former life in a clear full light. Sincerely
that in which he so cruelly of the Christian's open
scent of unrelenting fury such as embrace it
if indeed his ridiculousness was only negative &
retraction from any sense of sin he was like him

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No two Characters can be more different than these which our Saviour hath here set in Contrast; by which a lively Image is formed of the true state of most worshipping Assemblies here on Earth. The Chaff and the Wheat are blended, and must lie together, till the great Distinction be made at last, when the one shall *be gathered in the Garner*, and the other *burnt with unquenchable Fire*. Both may now meet in the same place of Worship, may join in the same Acts of Religion, and appear equally devout therein; whilst nevertheless one may be at Enmity with GOD in his Heart, and the other one in whom *his Soul is well pleased*. So it was with this Pharisee and Publican; so it ever has been since *Cain and Abel* brought their Offerings to the same Altar; and so it will continue to be till the Wicked and Righteous appear before the same Tribunal. And then the great, the important, and the eternal Distinction will be made.

We now live in a disordered and promiscuous State of Things; where not only *all Things come alike to all, both to the Just and the Unjust*, but where studied Vails and

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Disguises are so artfully put on, that the one cannot easily be distinguished from the other.

They may both appear equally *righteous before Men, but GOD knoweth the Heart.* For *there is no Darknes or shadow of Death, where the workers of Iniquity can hide themselves* from his all-penetrating Eye. If we cannot make the proper Distinction, he can whose *Understanding is infinite.*

4. We may hence see, that some of the worst of Men may, in their own Esteem, and that of others, frequently pass for some of the best.

As the Pharisees in general did among the *Jews*. It is surprising to observe with how much force the Shew and Form of Religion strikes the Minds, and sways the Judgments of Men, and how often it passes for (what is quite another thing) the Truth and Power of it. An evident Instance this of the great Weakness and Fallibility of the human Understanding, that Persons should be esteemed, not only by others, but by themselves, as eminent for Religion merely on the score of those things that have nothing of Religion in them, *e. g.* their Zeal, their Knowledge, their

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their sound Faith, their strong attachment to a particular Set of Modes, Forms, or Party-notions. Could any go further in these, and such like Circumstantials, than the Pharisees did in our Saviour's time? and yet none were greater Enemies to him than they. And he declared that *Publicans and Harlots would enter into the Kingdom of GOD before them (b)*.

And the same Spirit of Bigotry, Superstition, and blind Zeal, operates just the same way now as it did then. In the Church of *Rome* it reigns and triumphs. Did the Pharisees *trust in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others*? So do the Papists. Did *they* lay great Stress upon the Circumstantials, and neglect the Essentials of Religion? So do *these*. Did they make *void the Law of GOD by their own Traditions*? So do the Romanists. Did they *compass Sea and Land to make one Proselyte*? None more assiduous in this Affair than the Church of *Rome*. And the Proselytes of both had much the same Advantage. Were the Pharisees outrageous against those that dared to oppose their

cor-

(b) Mat. xxi. 51.

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corrupt Doctrines and Deeds? Not more so than modern *Catholicks*. Nay, did they think they did G O D good Service when they spilt the Blood of his Servants? Just so thinketh the Romish Church now. Both have acted the most villainous things under a pretence of Religion; have consecrated the worst of Crimes, and canonized the worst of Men; and yet, (what is strange) both have thought themselves, and have been thought by others, persons of singular Sanctity, and have looked upon the rest of Mankind as vile, impious and heretical.

The Parallel might be pursued in many more particulars. And all the use I mean to make of it is, to shew that a predominant Spirit of Superstition, and blind Zeal, acts just the same way now, it ever did. And may proceed so far as to make Men place Religion in those things that are not only foreign from it, but contrary to it; and to look upon themselves as some of the best of Men, when their true Character assigns them a place among the worst. So it was with the Pharisees in our Saviour's time, and so it hath been in the christian Church ever since.

But

But in the midst of all this confusion of Judgment, difference of Sentiment, and disguise of Characters, if we must judge of others, there is but one sure Rule that I know of to judge by; and that is, what our Lord himself hath laid down in this case, *by their Fruits ye shall know them (i)*. The true Characters of Men are only known by the Fruits they produce, whether those of the *Flesh* or those of the *Spirit*. And what those are the Apostle plainly tells us, *Gal. v. 19—23. Now the Works of the Flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, Fornication, Uncleaness, Lasciviousness, Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Heresies, Envyings, Murders, Drunkenness, Revellings, and such like. But the fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance.*

5. We further learn from the Character of this Pharisee, that it is no uncommon thing for those who are devoid of real Religion, to place a great Esteem and Importance in the Appendages of it.

Thus

(i) Mat. vii. 20.

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Thus the Pharisees, whom our Saviour declared to be the farthest from the Kingdom of G O D, where however of all others the most zealous for the external forms of Religion. The reason of which it is no hard matter to account for. It is not a creditable thing in the Eye of the World to shew no regard to Religion in any shape. So that vanity itself may induce some Men to put on the Appearances of it, and come as far as it's outworks. But finding that real Religion itself is inconsistent with their Lusts, they care not to go any farther. And to go so far may serve their purpose very well with Men. But then, though by this means they stand well enough in the Eye of the World, yet they do not stand so well in the judgment of Conscience, which upbraids them with their Sins, and declares them still destitute of real religion, notwithstanding the outward Shew they make of it. To satisfy or silence which they employ their Lusts to corrupt their Judgment, and employ their Judgment thus corrupted to give their Conscience the Lie; and boldly affirm that religion (whatever some Precisians may pretend) does actually consist
very

very much in these external forms of it, for which they have the warmest Zeal: and that they are of so great Importance that their Zeal for them may reasonably be allowed to palliate or extenuate some little Defects in their moral Character. And by this means they come in time to stand well not only with the World but with their own Conscience too, without one grain of real Religion in their Hearts. In short, they are great Zealots for Circumstantials and Ceremonials, because it being all the Religion they have, they are willing to make the most of it. Thus because they cannot come up to the Standard, they are for bringing that down lower. Because they cannot rise to that, they will force that to stoop to them; and make Religion to consist in those things in which it does not, because they have a Dislike to those things in which it really does. Which is the true reason that the warmest Zeal for the Forms of religion is often found in those who are the greatest Strangers to the Power of it.

6. From this Prayer of the penitent Publican we may learn, what it is that will render our Prayers acceptable to G O D.

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There were four things I observed in it especially remarkable, *viz.* It's Seriousness and Humility, it's Earnestness and Fervour, the penitential Sorrow it expressed, and the Faith and Hope that accompanied that Repentance.

In like manner then let us learn to address our prayers to GOD.

1. With the greatest Humility and Seriousness of Mind.

No Temper is more decent, or more becoming Creatures, in their Addresses to the great Creator. Did we but truly think who we are, whom we pray to, and what we pray for, it were enough to possess our minds with the utmost Reverence in this solemn Act of Worship. And most certain it is, that they who discover any signs of Levity, Irreverence and Vanity in this Duty, do not well consider what it is they are about.

2. Let us learn to pray with the same Earnestness and Fervour the Publican did.

We have many Examples of this recorded in Scripture, in the prayers of *Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Nehemiah, David, Solomon,* and others, who discovered the closest Attention, and the warmest Engagement of their

their minds in this religious Exercise. Hence they are said to *wrestle with God* (k). To *plead with him* (l). To *pour out their Souls before him* (m). And the Apostle *James* tells us it is the *fervent Prayer of the righteous Man that availeth much* (n.) And how can we be indifferent when we consider that we are begging for the Life of our immortal Souls; for the Mercy which alone can save us from eternal Misery.

3. Let us also with the Publican pray, under a deep sense of our Sinfulness and Guilt.

With penitential Compunction he smote upon his Breast, stood afar off, and held down his Eyes through confusion of Spirit. The Consciousness of his Guilt overwhelmed his Mind, interrupted his Speech, and turned his Prayer into broken Sighs and unutterable Groans. But those broken Sighs will surely be heard if they proceed from a broken Heart. And even these, we are told, are not without the Assistance of the Spirit of God (o). Did we rightly know ourselves we should see reason to make a

S 2 humble

(k) Gen. xxxii. 25. (l) Jer. xii. 1. (m) Psal. lxi. 8.
(n) Jam. v. 16. (o) Rom. viii. 26.

SERM. humble Confession of our Sins a great part
X. of our Prayer, and go through it with that

Self-abasement and Remorse the poor Publican shewed. And this will surely be accepted of him who hears the Cry of the Penitent, and despises not the Sacrifice of a contrite Spirit (p).

Lastly, Let all our Prayers be animated with Faith and Hope.

With Faith in the Merits and Intercession of Christ, and Hope in the Mercy of God, and his readiness to forgive returning Sinners through him. This is that great and blessed Hope which the Gospel hath set before us. An Advantage which the Publican had not, but which we who are favoured with the Light and Grace of the Gospel do abundantly enjoy. And which may inspire us with strong Consolation amidst all that fear and sorrow with which a Conscience of Guilt may sometimes oppress our Souls. For where Sin hath abounded the Grace of God in Christ hath super-abounded, which is of many Offences to Justification, and reigns through Righteousness unto eternal Life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Thus


As no
person
is to pray
like the
Pharisee
so every
christian
is not to
pray like
the Pub:
-lican
every
Person is
to adapt
his pray^r
suitable
to the
real state
of his
soul &
corrected
in every
view. & acknowledge
his several aggravations,

& also acknowledge the grace of God
as displayed in the beginning & progress of
his enablement to make in the divine
life to the glory of God. Such grace is
very & important

(p) Psal. li. 17.

Thus then let us learn to pray. For such SERM.
is the Prayer that Christ commends, and such X.
the Prayer that God accepts. Thus let us ~
come to the Throne of Grace, and we shall
never go from it unheard, unaccepted or
uncomforted.

I shall only add as a Conclusion of the
whole, that this happy, pious, praying frame
of Spirit, we should daily endeavour to im-
prove and cultivate, and to carry it with us
into all the varying Scenes of Life. And
to retain such a Seriousness of Mind, a Re-
verence of God, and habitual Disposition to
Prayer, is the full Import of that Precept
of the Apostle, which requires us to *pray*
without ceasing (q). And happy were it for
us, if we could more constantly preserve
that calm and holy frame of Mind, in which
we shall be always fit to pray, and glad
to die.

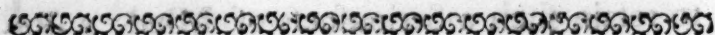
(q) 1 Theff. v. 17.
There is a true, excellent correcter
between these two, who
have the  than temper
Love God & religion humbled
for sin & magnify the free grace of God in
renewing them, & set SER their
minds & rejoice in the glory of God
thru the precious meritorious death &
intercession of their dear Lord 1769.



S E R M O N XI.

The Principle and Practice of RE-
LIGION, the WHOLE of MAN.

A SERMON preached to Young PEOPLE.



ECCLES. xii. 13.

*Let us hear the Conclusion of the
whole matter, fear GOD, and keep
his Commandments : For this is the
whole Duty of Man.*



HIS is the practical Improve-
ment of the best Sermon that
ever was preached, on the most
serious Subject that ever was
handled. The Preacher was *Solomon*; the
most renowned for Wisdom of all the Sons
of Men; a great part of which he dearly
bought

bought by his own Experience. His text was, *Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity (a).*

This Subject he treats of in a very lively, copious, and affecting manner, as every Preacher does that Subject, the Importance of which he hath had long experience of himself. And having fully proved and illustrated this Truth in the preceeding Discourse, he concludes all with this single Use by way of Application, *Let us hear the Conclusion of the whole matter, fear GOD, and keep his Commandments: For this is the whole Duty of Man.*

In the Original it is—*for this is the whole of Man.* A phrase of much greater Latitude than that which is used by our Translators, who by inserting the word *Duty* have too much confined the Sense.

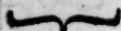
These words contain a very comprehensive Duty enjoined, and the reason of it annexed. The Duty enjoined, or inferred from the whole Subject of the foregoing Sermon, is, *Fear GOD, and keep his Commandments;* the reason of it annexed is, *for this is the whole of Man.* I shall speak to each of these distinctly, and then conclude with an

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Application suitably adapted to persons in youthful Life, for whose benefit this Discourse is principally intended.

I. In these words we have a very comprehensive Duty commanded, or inferred from the Subject of the preceding Discourse.

And that is, *fear God, and keep his Commandments*: The first containing the Principle, the other the Practice of all real Religion. Each of which I must explain as distinctly as my time will admit.

Religion consists of two parts, the inward and outward, or that of the Heart and that of the Life; the Root and the Fruit; the one called the Principle, and the other the Practice of Religion.

I. We have here the Root or Principle of Religion; which consists in the *fear of God*, from whence all true Religion in the Life must flow.

And since it is impossible the Fruit should be good unless the Root be so, it highly concerns us to look well to this first Principle of all Religion; to see to it that the true fear of God hath taken possession of our

our Hearts: Because there are some things that go under this name which are very different from what our Text intends.

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There is a *tormenting* Fear of GOD; such as the Devils have, who *fear and tremble*.

There is a *servile* Fear of GOD; such as a Slave has of an unmerciful Master, or a Subject of a cruel Tyrant. Both these kinds of Fear are attended with a hatred of their Object; and a true Love to GOD entirely expels them, as the Apostle *John* tells us, 1 *John* iv. 18.

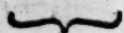
Again, there is a vain and *visionary* Fear of GOD; such as a superstitious man has, arising from a wrong notion of him as an arbitrary and capricious Being.

And in fine, there is an *occasional* and *transient* Fear of GOD; which may arise in the Heart at certain times (for instance, under any threatening Providence) but is soon gone, and leaves no durably good effect behind it. And this a Hypocrite may have.

But that Fear of GOD which the text recommends is, in one word, a *filial Reverence*; a Fear tempered with Love; or such a reverent regard to GOD as a dutiful Child

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Child hath to a wise and tender Parent. And as we are all of us in the strictest sense the *Off-spring of God*, it is therefore our most reasonable and most natural Duty, thus to reverence him as our Father.

And the Sources from whence this filial Reverence flows will furnish us with the strongest Motives to it, *viz.* his Authority over us, his Presence with us, his Interest in us, and his Concern for us. These are the natural sources of that filial Fear which is due to earthly Parents; and for the same reasons ought we much more to fear the *Father of our Spirits*.

1. Because of his Authority over us, which is much greater than that which any earthly Parent has over his own Off-spring. God's authority over us is supreme and unlimited: He hath an absolute and independent right to us, for we are wholly his Off-spring, Soul, Spirit, and Body: We are intirely in his Hands, who can make us happy or miserable beyond all that we are able to imagine. Whom then should we fear but him? Therefore saith our Saviour, *fear not them that kill the Body, but are not able to kill the Soul; but rather fear him who*

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who is able to kill both Soul and Body in Hell (b).

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2. God's Presence with us is another proper ground and motive of our Fear of him. And his presence with us is perpetual: We are never from under his Eye, who observes not only our outward Actions, but our inward Thoughts, Purposes, Desires, Views, and Motives of Conduct; the secret Principles we are acted by, and whatever gives the Heart either pleasure or pain: Of all these things his Omniscience gives him a more intimate and perfect Knowledge, than our own Sensations give us. And should we not stand in awe of this all-knowing and omnipresent God? With what Reverence and Caution does the parental Eye inspire an ingenuous Child! How then should we reverence the Father of our Spirits, whose Eye is continually upon us, and who knows us far better than we do ourselves!

3. God hath an unalienable Interest and Propriety in us, and therefore we should fear him. We are more his than we are our own; and as we are intirely his, he lays a just claim to all the Reverence and Homage

SERM. image of our Hearts : And not to fear him is
 XI. virtually to disclaim his right to us.

Lastly, His paternal Concern for us demands our filial Reverence of him. No Parent on Earth hath so kind and tender a regard for the Interest of his Children as God hath for ours. He knows every degree and kind of Satisfaction we enjoy, and every inward and outward pain we feel ; for it is his Hand which dispenses both, and his Providence which augments or lessens, continues or removes both, just in such a degree, and at such a time, as he knows will be most for our Benefit. He is sensible of all our wants, though we are insensible of his Goodness in supplying them ; he knows our weaknesses, though we know not how much we owe to his Grace in strengthening us.

In a Word, the true fear of God consists in a deep habitual Impression of his Authority over us, his Presence with us, his Propriety in us, and his fatherly Concern for us.

This Sentiment of God we must not only admit, but endeavour to have it inwrought into the very frame and temper of our Souls,

so as to live under the constant Influence thereof; as a dutiful Child does, who is always under the prudent Father's Eye, and serves him with all his Heart, because from his Heart he loves and fears him. This, I think, is the most clear and lively Image we can have of that holy Disposition of Heart, which in the Text, and so many other places of Scripture, is called *the Fear of the Lord*.

I shall only further observe under this Head, that this *Fear of God* is not only the Principle, but the Perfection of all true Religion. For we are commanded by the Apostle *to perfect Holiness in the Fear of God* (c). And hence it is that the *Fear of the Lord* is so often put for the Whole of Religion.

So much for the first part of the Precept, *fear God*; which comprehends all the Religion of the Heart.

II. The other part of the Precept is, *keep his Commandments*.

This springs from the former, as the Fruit from the Root; and is comprehensive of

(c) 2 Cor. vii. 1.

SERM. of all practical obedience, or the religion of
 XI. the Life: Which opens to us a very wide
 and fruitful Field of Contemplation, for *the*
Commandments of the Lord are exceeding
broad (d).

What is it now *to keep the Commandments of God*? I answer in general, it is to do whatever we know will please him, or to comply with every notice of his Will. For whatever we know is pleasing to God and agreeable to his Will, *that* we should bind upon our Consciences with as strict an Obligation, as if we saw it expressed among the precepts of the Decalogue, or heard it proclaimed to us in the Thunders of *Sinai*.

Now there are two Ways by which God is pleased to manifest his Will to Man, *viz.* by the light of Reason, and that of Revelation; the former is called the Law of Nature, to supply the defects of which God was pleased to superadd the latter. The heathen World had only the first of these to teach them the Will of God; which was but a very poor and imperfect Direction. The Jews indeed had a divine Revelation, but it was only a partial and limited one, and

(d) Psal. cxix. 96.

and preparatory to that more complete and extensive Revelation which we enjoy; by the reflected light of which the Law of nature appears as much clearer to us than it did to the Gentile World, as the christian Revelation is more explicit and comprehensive than that of the Jews. Or, to make use of the common Metaphor to which I have just referred, as the Light of Revelation is often compared to that of the Sun, and the Light of Nature to that of the Moon, we have both in a greater perfection than any before us since the Fall ever had; for the Light of Nature as it shines upon us reflected from the Gospel Revelation, is as much superior to that which the heathen World enjoyed, as the Light of the full Moon is to that which it gives just after it's Change: and the Light of the Christian Revelation exceeds that of the Jewish, as much as the brightness of the Meridian Sun does that of the rising Dawn. So that we have the Advantage of a clearer manifestation of the divine Will in both these Ways, than was ever made under any Dispensation that preceeded ours. A Happiness! for which we can never enough be thankful.

And

And to keep the Commandments of God, is to comply with whatever we learn from these advantageous Lights he hath given us, to be agreeable to his Will. And this implies two things, *viz.* a Care to understand the will of God by those Lights which we enjoy; and an impartial Performance of it when understood.

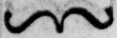
1. To keep the Commandments of God, implies a careful Endeavour to understand the will of God by those Lights which he hath given us. For notwithstanding all the superior Advantages which Christians enjoy to know the will of God, many have sadly mistaken it: And their mistakes have not only been the Source of much animosity and disorder in the Christian Church, but have often disguised the pure Religion of the Gospel under all the frightful shapes of Enthusiasm, Superstition and Bigotry.

But then what have those mistakes been owing to? Why to this one cause universally, *viz.* their not adhering invariably to the concurrent directions of Scripture and Reason, but following other rules and guides than those which God hath given them. A Practice, which if it does not lead them
intire-

intirely to forsake the divine Rule (which is sometimes the case) does however strongly incline them to pervert it. One who resolves to shut his Eyes may walk in darkness at noon-day.

But if we would not mistake the Will of GOD, let us often pray, that GOD would direct our minds into the Knowledge of it : and guard them against those Errors into which indulged Prejudice and Corruptions are so apt insensibly to betray us.—Let us make the best use of both our Rules, instead of despising either ; and compare them together, because they not only concur in the same Direction, but mutually throw a Light upon each other. We should especially take care we do not set them in opposition to each other, as some do. For instance, let us not under pretence of following *the lesser light* of Reason, reject the peculiar Doctrines of Revelation ; for an object may be distinctly discerned by the Sun, which cannot be so easily seen by Moonlight. On the other hand, let not our peculiar esteem for the light of Revelation lead us to depreciate that of Reason. Much less should we presume (as some have done)

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to oppose the pretended dictates of Conscience, and the *Light within*, to the plain declarations both of Scripture and Reason. But then,

2. When we have attained the certain Knowledge of the divine Will, our next care is *impartially* to perform it. Our performance of the divine Will, I say, must be impartial. By which I mean,

We must adjust our regards to the several parts of our known Duty in proportion to their importance. And not, as the *Pharisees* did, (and as some Christians are apt to do now) lay a mighty stress upon the least things, and very little upon the greatest. If it be asked, what are these little and great things in Religion, that we may proportion our regards to their respective importance? I answer; those things which immediately and directly tend to mend the Temper, and make the Heart better, to form the mind to vital Piety, and make us more like to G O D, and fit for Heaven, these must always be reckoned among the great things of Religion, which have a claim to our first and chief regards. And those which have only a remote tendency to these ends,

or

or none at all, are to be accounted among those little things in which it would not only be weak, but dangerous, to place any great Importance; whether they be matters of Practice, Doctrine, or Ceremony. And for this reason we are required to pay a greater regard to Duties of a moral, than those of a positive nature; because the former are in themselves, and in their effects, much more excellent than the latter.

We must also pay an equal regard to all Duties of equal Importance: And not lay a greater stress upon some than upon others, purely because the former are more easy to us, or more suited to our natural Tempers. This is very wrong, but very common; for how often do we see some Christians direct their Attentions to the duties of Piety much more than to those of Virtue? Whilst others pay a greater deference to the Obligations of the second Table than to those of the first. Some regard the Prohibitions of Scripture more than the Precepts, whilst others are more afraid of sins of Omission than of those of Commission. But this is not consistent with that

possibilities
are founded
on this
principle
deducted
the Law of
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namely
that God
has and is
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of infinite
wisdom
purity &
Love. v. 11

Im-
appears in the internal of requiring us.
namely to assist in the performance of good
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viency to such valuable benefits. & so to be
small the accounts to be required. & so have
why direct by divine assistance

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Impartiality of obedience which GOD requires of us, and which *David* expressed when he said, *I have respect unto all thy Commandments; I esteem all thy Precepts concerning all things to be right (e).*

I will only add, that our *impartial* obedience to the whole Will of GOD, must proceed from the forementioned Principle of an habitual Reverence of him, and be performed in dependence on his Grace for our present Assistance, and on his Son for our final Acceptance. For as it respects Christians it certainly comprehends in it all those devout and religious regards to Jesus Christ, which the gospel Revelation requires as due to him under those several Characters and Capacities in which he is there represented.

Having thus briefly opened to you the nature and extent of the Duty which the Text enjoins, I am now,

II. To lay before you the Motive by which it is urged.

For this is the Whole of Man. That is, this is the whole Duty, the whole Happiness, and

(e) Psal. cxix. 6, 128.

and the whole Perfection of the human Nature. SERM. XI.

1. This is the whole *Duty* of Man. It comprehends all the Duties of every particular Character, Station, Circumstance, and Relation in life we can possibly be in; and will lead us to a right conduct in all. For it is only considering with ourselves, "in what manner am I now to act so as to please GOD? What part of Conduct is most agreeable to his Will, most conformable to his Word and the dictates of right Reason, and which my Conscience will most approve upon a future Review? That is undoubtedly the part I am now to chuse."

2. This constant regard to GOD, and ready disposition to do his Will, comprehends not only all our Duty but all our *Happiness*. It not only conducts us to Happiness, but contains it. Even now, under all the Imperfections of our nature, and the Inconveniences of our present situation, the mind is sensible of no higher satisfactions than those which arise from it's intent engagement in the Service and Worship of GOD, under

SERM. the Influence of a right apprehension of him.

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What then will be the Happiness that results from hence, when the Soul shall be quite free from all that Darkness, Distraction, and Disorder, which so much mixes with, and allays the pleasure of it's present Devotions! Then will our Felicity be perfect, when our Love and Fear of GOD, and our Obedience to his Will, are most complete. For *in keeping his Commandments there is great Reward (f).*

3. It is not only all our Duty and Happiness, but all our *Perfection*. It comprehends every valuable Accomplishment of our Nature. It is the Dignity and Elevation of the Soul. And in proportion to the degree in which we love and fear the great GOD, and know and do his Will, we approach to the highest pitch of Perfection to which our Natures are capable of being improved.

I shall only further observe, that this is not only our whole Duty, Perfection and Happiness *now*, but it will be so *hereafter*. It is all the Duty, Perfection and Happiness

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ness of the glorified Spirits in Heaven. It will be ours in the most exalted state of our nature to all Eternity, and throughout the whole extent and duration of our Being.

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What remains now, is,

III. To apply these plain and important Truths in a suitable Address to persons in younger Life, for whose Benefit they are chiefly designed.

My dear young Friends, you have now had laid before you, in a plain, familiar, and summary View, all that is required of you, to make you Happy in this World, and for ever. I would hope, that there is not much left for me now to do; and that your own Conscience will make the most suitable Application of these important Truths to your mind upon a future recollection.—I know you desire to be happy; I know you desire to be esteemed and loved both by God and Man; and to be plainly informed what you must do to be so. Why, of this you have now been plainly informed. And I flatter myself, that your own Reason, Understanding, Conscience, and Consent, have

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gone along with all that hath been said. I appeal again to your own Judgment: Is it not the most reasonable thing in the World, that you should fear GOD? That you should live under an habitual Reverence of Him who made you? Who hath an unlimited Authority over you; who is always present with you; who hath the highest Interest in you; and the tenderest Concern for you! who made you to make you happy! But who is able (if you do not fear him) to make you unspeakably and for ever miserable!——Is it not most reasonable, that you endeavour by all the means you can to please him? By studying to know and do his Will; by attending to the Directions of his Word, the Light of Reason, and the Voice of Conscience, which is no other than the Voice of GOD within you. Is it not gracious and kind in Him to afford you so many Advantages above others to know his Will? and is it not then most reasonable that when you do know it, you should readily and impartially comply with it? have respect to all his Commands; and always lay the greatest
Stress

Stress upon the greatest things? Especially as he himself expressly tells you, that this is all your Duty, Perfection and Happiness *now*, and is, and must, in the nature of things, be so, as long as you have a Being!

These things are so plain that they carry their own Conviction along with them: And therefore I will not presume upon your time and patience to urge them any further upon you. I have only two things to beg of you and I have done.

1. Let these plain, important Principles of Religion enter deep into your Mind, take possession of your Heart, and always influence your Temper. Think of them, and of their Importance, every Day you live. I cannot be satisfied with your bare Assent to them. O! that they were deeply inwrought into the very Frame and Temper of your Spirits! And if you frequently and seriously think of them, by the Grace and Blessing of God they will be so.

These are the religious Principles in which you are educated; and it is your vast Happiness that you are, when so many

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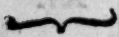
XI.

ny thousands of young Persons *perish for lack of Knowledge*, and those means of right Instruction which you enjoy. And these are the Principles which your pious Parents and Friends would fain have instilled into, and fixed in your Mind betimes; because they would provide for your Happiness in another World as well as in this. For their sake then, for your own sake, and for GOD's sake, let me beseech you to receive them into your Heart, and *let them never depart from you.*

2. Be sure to retain them, and resolve to live by them, in whatever situation or circumstances of Life, Providence may hereafter dispose of you. It is not long that you will enjoy the Benefit of those wise Instructions and good Examples, under the Influence of which you are now so happily situated. You will, ere long, launch out into a World full of Temptation, Vice and Vanity; where you will, very probably, meet with many bad Examples and Allurements to Folly; where you will see (and, perhaps, be shocked at first, to see) a Multitude of reasonable
Men,

Men, who, instead of living under an habitual sense of their Maker's Authority and Presence, appear to have *no fear of God before their Eyes*; who, instead of making it their great Business to please him, seem intent on nothing but to please themselves in contempt of him. O! do not follow that *Multitude to do evil*, but resolve, in opposition to all the Importunities of Folly, steadily to adhere to the Dictates of sober Reason, in conjunction with the Precepts of the divine Word, as your only Guide. This will (and, believe it, this only will) be your safe Guide through all your future Snares and Dangers. It will guard you from Delusion and Superstition on the one hand, and from Profaneness and Impiety on the other; will be your Clew to lead you through all the Labyrinths of Life, and your Pole-star to direct your course to Immortality and Bliss.

I will add but one thing more, and that is the Consideration with which *Solomon* enforces the Advice he hath now been giving us, contained in the Words immediately

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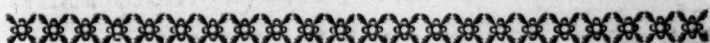
diately following the Text, *viz.* that God who calls you to make his Fear your great Concern, and his Service your great Business now, will hereafter *bring every Work into Judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*





S E R M O N XII.

HUMAN LIFE a PILGRIMAGE.



DEUT. viii. 2.

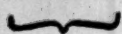
And thou shalt remember all the Way which the Lord thy GOD led thee these forty Years in the Wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine Heart, whether thou wouldest keep his Commandments or no.



THE most important part of the History of the Old Testament is the Children of *Israel's* Deliverance out of *Egypt*, their wandering forty Years in the Wilderness, and their

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their Settlement in the land of *Canaan*: A lively Emblem of a Christian's deliverance from the bondage of Sin, his passage through this World of temptation and Trial to his Inheritance in Heaven, the state of everlasting Rest. We wander at present in a wild and barren Desert, tending to a better Land, the heavenly Canaan; which therefore we should keep ever in our Eye (as the *Israelites* did their Earthly one) to animate and encourage us under all the Hardships and Troubles we may meet with by the Way.

The *Israelites* had already wandered forty Years in the Deserts of *Arabia*, called *ver. 15. a great and terrible Wilderness*. This Year was to terminate their Pilgrimage, and put them into Possession of the promised and long-expected Land of *Canaan*. But this year they were to lose their faithful Leader and Lawgiver *Moses*, who was not permitted to conduct them into the promised Land. This Chapter therefore, and indeed the greatest part of this Book, (which contains a Repetition of their Law, together with many urgent Motives to Obedience) may be considered as *Moses's* dying Speech, and the last Advice he gave them

them before his Death. One important Part of which we have in the Words of the Text. *Thou shalt remember all the Way which the Lord thy GOD led thee these forty Years in the Wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine Heart, whether thou wouldest keep his Commandments or no.*

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From which words I propose to handle these two Observations,

- I. That the *Israelites* wandering through the Wilderness to *Canaan*, is a lively Image and Representation of a Christian's Passage through this World to Heaven.
- II. That whilst a Christian is in this state of Pilgrimage, it is his Duty often to remember, and consider the various Ways of GOD, and the Dispensations of his Providence towards him, especially those which have been more extraordinary and remarkable; which is the Duty the text enjoins.

I. The wandering of the *Israelites* through the Wilderness to *Canaan*, is a lively Image
and

SERM. and Representation of a Christian's Passage
XII. through this World to Heaven.

The principal Points of Resemblance between them I am now to lay before you ; and,

1. The Passage of the *Israelites* through the Wilderness was a very *unsettled* State ; so is ours through this World. For forty Years they dwelt in Tents and Booths (of which their feast of Tabernacles was instituted as an annual Commemoration) wandering from one place to another but fixing no where. Their several Encampments and Decampments were directed by the *Pillar of the Cloud*. When that arose from over the Tabernacle, and went before it, then all the Congregation decamped ; that is, took up their Tents and followed it. When it stood still and rested over the Tabernacle, then and there the Congregation encamped, that is, pitched their Tents, and continued till the cloudy Pillar moved forward again. And thus were their several Stations determined by a constant Miracle.

Thus moveable and unfixed is our Situation in this World. If we do not continually wander about from place to place, as
the

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the *Israelites* did, yet we are far from having any fixed and constant Abode. The perpetual Alterations we see about us, either in our Friends, our Neighbours, or ourselves, our Persons, Tempers, Estates, Families, or Circumstances; and in short, the vast Change which the compass of a few Years makes in almost every thing around us, is sufficient to convince us that we are in no fixed or settled Condition here. It is only in Heaven we are to dwell in *Mansions*, that is, in abiding and resting places. Here we dwell, (like the *Israelites*) in weak and moveable Tabernacles (*a*), that are soon taken down by Death, which determines our final and everlasting Settlement.

2. The Travel of the *Israelites* through the Wilderness was not only an unsettled but a troublesome and dangerous State. They endured many Hardships, Fatigues, and Inconveniences; made many a wearisome March through burning Sands, exposed to Heat and Thirst and Danger; not only from the wild Beasts which abounded there (hence called a *howling* Wilderness (*b*),) but from those Nations through whose Borders

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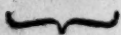
they

(*a*) 2 Pet. i. 13, 14.

(*b*) Deut. xxxii. 10.

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they were obliged to pass and fight their way; such as the *Ammonites*, the *Moabites*, and Og King of *Basban* (c.).

Now here, methinks, is another fit Emblem of a Christian's Pilgrimage through this world, which to him is not only a barren but a hostile Land. From the very nature of things, and the Circumstances of his present State, he meets with many Inconveniences and Sufferings, and from the malice of his Enemies more. Setting aside the natural Evils, which he bears in common with others, Sicknes, Pains, Crosses, Disappointments, personal and family Afflictions, he is exposed to many spiritual Evils and Dangers as a Christian, which create him no small concern; particularly, frequent Instigations to Sin, from a corrupt and depraved Nature, from an insnaring and delusive World, and from a wily and watchful Enemy, *going about indefatigably seeking whom he may devour*. Hence the Scriptures very properly represent the christian Life not only as a state of Pilgrimage, but as a state of Warfare; as that of the *Israelites* was when they travelled through
the

the Wilderness. Of consequence then it must be a very troublesome and dangerous one.

3. In the Wilderness through which the *Israelites* travelled to *Canaan*, there were many By-paths or devious Tracts, by which they might be in danger of going astray. It was not like a Journey in a publick Road, through a populous Country, where the way lies direct and plain, and open, but through intricate and perplexed Turnings, amongst which it usually requires no small Circumspection to chuse the right way.

And how much this resembles a Christian's Walk through this World is very apparent. There are many By-ways, and tempting Paths in Life, into which Multitudes, without fear or thought, boldly and readily run, and which lead them into inevitable Destruction. Our Saviour himself tells us, that the way which leads to Life is a *streight and narrow way*; little frequented, and thick beset with Thorns and Difficulties; and yet this, we are sure, is the right way, the way which *leads to Life* (d). And the chief reason why so few enter upon it

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is,

(d) Matth. vii. 14.

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is, not that they cannot discern it (for it is distinguished enough) but because it is narrow and thorny; which discourages Men from entering upon or pursuing it. But,

4. Notwithstanding all the By-paths and Windings in the Wilderness, the *Israelites* had an infallible Guide to lead them in the way they should go. That was the *Shekinah*, or the glorious Emblem of the divine Presence over their Tabernacle, by which they were conducted all the forty Years they travelled through the Wilderness, and by which their different Stations in it were determined. And had they refused to follow this divine Guidance, they had soon lost and bewildered themselves, and never reached the promised Land.

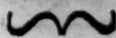
So notwithstanding the danger we are in of going astray from the Path of Life, we have a certain Rule and Direction, which infallibly points it out to us, saying, *This is the Way, walk you in it.* And this direction is the Word of God, which, if we follow it, will as safely conduct us through all the Errors and Dangers of the World, as the Pillar of Cloud did the *Israelites* through those of the Wilderness. This is our Map, by
which

a Pilgrimage.

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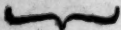
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which we are to travel through this World to a better; and has this peculiar property in it, that it not only describes to us the right Way, but tells us what we are to meet with in that way, by which we may know it to be right. And besides this, it warns us of every By-path by which we may be tempted to go astray, and plainly tells us what will be the Consequence if we do. So that if we keep close to this divine Direction, we shall be in no Danger of losing the right Way.

5. Though the *Israelites* travelled forty Years in the Wilderness, yet they were all that while not far from the Borders of the promised Land, It was only the Desert of *Arabia* that parted *Egypt* from *Canaan*; which might be passed over almost in as many Weeks as they spent Years; which indeed was one great cause of their murmuring. And the reason why they were thus led about so long in the Wilderness we shall see by and by. In the mean time we have here another Circumstance of Similitude to a Christian's State in this World. If he be in the right way to Heaven, he is never far from it: He lives on the Bor-

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ders of it. A very little and unexpected Incident may let him suddenly into the eternal World; which should every Day therefore be in his Thoughts. But if he is not permitted to enter into the Land of Rest so soon as he could wish, he must fortify his Soul with patience to bear the remaining Labours of his Pilgrimage, be they more or less, till it please GOD to put a final Period to them all.

6. The reason why the Children of Israel wandered so long in the Wilderness before they reached the promised Land is given us in the Text, *viz. To humble them, and to prove them, and to know what was in their Heart, and whether they would keep GOD's Commandments or no, so verse 16. That he might humble thee, and prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end.* So that their Wilderness-Life was designed for a state of Discipline and Probation, to humble them for the Sins they had committed in Egypt, and after they came out from thence: And to put them upon another Trial, to see if they would give any Testimony of their Reformation. But as they still continued in their Murmuring, Rebellion, and Idolatry, they

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they were punished for these Sins by being detained so much longer from the promised Land.

Nay, for these Sins they almost all of them died in the Wilderness. *Heb. iii. 17.* *But with whom was he grieved forty Years, was it not with those that had sinned, whose Carcasses fell in the Wilderness?* So that of the six hundred thousand Men that came out of *Egypt*, only two of them lived to enter the Land of *Canaan*, viz. *Caleb* and *Joshua*; all the rest that came out of *Egypt*, from twenty Years old and upwards, died in the Desert; and all that entered into *Canaan*, excepting those two, were either born in the Wilderness, or were Children when they came from *Egypt* (e).

But that which chiefly provoked the Lord to punish them with this wandering Life was, the false report which their Spies brought back, and which they readily received, when they sent them forth to descry the promised Land. They spent forty Days in this Business. And when they returned they so disheartened the Congregation by their Misrepresentation of things,

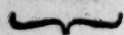
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that

(e) See Numb. xxvi. 63—65.

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that they fell a murmuring, and wished to return back into *Egypt*. Only *Caleb* and *Joshua* brought a different and true account of things. To these therefore it was promised that they should enter into *Canaan*; but as for the rest, GOD declared that not one of them should ever enjoy the good Land they had despised: And moreover, that their Children should wander forty Years in the Wilderness, according to the number of Days their Scouts took in spying out the Land. This happened on the first Year after they came out of *Egypt*; when they might have taken, and were just about to take possession of the promised Land: But for this Sin they were made to wander nine and thirty Years longer; during all which time, excepting the last Year, we read but very little of them (*f*).

Now, whether it be not sometimes by way of Punishment, that GOD is pleased to detain some of his People from their state of Rest and Happiness for a long time, as he did the *Israelites* from the Land of *Canaan*, I will not take upon me to say. But without all Doubt, this World is a state of
Trial

(*f*) See Numb. xiv. 26. and following.

Trial and Temptation to them all; in which they are detained the longer, that they may be more fit for, and more ardently desirous of the heavenly *Canaan*, when they are well wearied with the Labours and Difficulties of this their earthly Pilgrimage. And there are three Graces which the Trials of Life are very proper to cultivate, and to the Exercise of which the *Israelites* were more especially called, during their passage through the Wilderness. And they are Faith, Hope, and Patience: All proper to a state of Suffering, and mutually subservient to each other. *Faith* keeps it's Eye on GOD in all we suffer, looks beyond the Agency of second Causes, views the Direction of the divine Hand and adores it. And thus is very subservient to the Support of Patience. *Patience*, under the Influence of Faith, submits to the Hand of GOD in all, saying, *It is the Lord, let him do with me what seemeth good in his sight.* And *Hope*, enlivened by Faith, and confirmed by Patience, looks beyond all to that future and better state of things, where we shall meet with an unspeakable Recompence for all we can go through to obtain it.

This

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This was that good frame of Spirit which the various Hardships of a Pilgrimage-Life were designed to cultivate in the *Israelites*; and this that happy temper of Mind which all the Tribulations of the present World are intended to improve in us; in order to prepare and qualify us more for a state of everlasting Rest. Not but there are other reasons for which good Men are sometimes long detained from their final Happiness: *e. g.* To be shining Examples of Goodness, to be serviceable to their Friends, and Instruments of promoting the Cause of God, and Interest of Religion in the World. But this, doubtless, is one great and general reason, *viz.* to *humble and prove them*, to make *them* more fit for their heavenly Rest, and *that* more welcome when it comes; and answers to that for which the *Israelites* were so long detained in the Wilderness, and which, at the same time, gives a satisfying account of that extraordinary Providence.

7. In order to keep up the Faith, Patience, and Hope of the *Israelites*, full and frequent Descriptions were given them of the Goodness of that Land to which they were travelling. They were often told that it was
a good

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a good Land, *flowing with Milk and Honey*, the ordinary Food in that Country; *a land of Brooks of Water, and of Fountains, and Depths that spring out of the Valleys and Hills; a land of Wheat, and Barley, and Vines, and Fig-trees, and Pomegranates; a land of Oil-Olive, and Honey; a land wherein they might eat Bread without scarceness; a land whose Stones were Iron, and out of whose Hills they might dig Brass (g).* That is, abounding with every thing necessary to the comfortable Accommodations of Life.—Moreover, they might have a fair Prospect of it from *Pisgab*, a Mountain situated on it's very Borders, from whence *Moses* surveyed it's whole Dimensions (*b*). And more than this, they had a sensible Specimen of it's Fertility in the largeness of the Grapes, Pomegranates and Figs, which they, that went to spy out the Land, brought back with them (*i*). All which were great Supports to their Hope and Patience.

Nor are our Faith, and Patience, and Hope, without the like Supports, in respect to the Heavenly *Canaan*. O! what great and glorious things are told us of the City
of

(g) Deut. viii. 7—10. (b) Numb. xxi. 20. (i) Numb. xiii. 23, 24.

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of the living GOD, the Metropolis of the universal King! What ravishing Descriptions does the Word of GOD give us of Heaven! Enough, one would think, to make every good Man impatient of Earth, and *long to be dissolved*.——We have indeed no visible prospect of it but what we have by an Eye of Faith. An impenetrable Veil of Flesh intercepts it's Glory from our natural Sight. But the Satisfaction and Joy we feel from the prospect of it by an Eye of Faith, is as great as that which was raised in the Hearts of the *Israelites* by a sight of the promised land from the Top of *Pisgah*.——And as for the sensible Pledges and Foretastes of the Happiness of Heaven, we have many such in this state of distance from it. I mean the pleasures of Communion with GOD, the sweet Satisfaction of a good Conscience, and the overflowing Joys of that Soul in which the Spirit of GOD resides with all his gracious and comforting Influences.——Nay more, there lived one Person on Earth who had actually been in Heaven himself; and hath told us what a Place it is; hath discovered to us that happy Land, and brought a better

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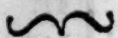
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better report of it than either *Caleb* or *Joshua* did of the Land of *Canaan*. I mean our Lord *Jesus Christ* himself, who came from Heaven to Earth, to shew us the way from Earth to Heaven, and who is himself *the Way, the Truth, and the Life*.

Lastly, When the *Israelites* were come to the End of their Pilgrimage, before they could enter the promised Land, they were obliged to pass over the River *Jordan* which separated the Wilderness from *Canaan*. Here lay their greatest Difficulty at the very end of their Journey. A deep, unfordable River, which at that time too was swelled above it's Banks, which the whole Multitude with the Ark and Tabernacle, their little ones and all the Carriages were to pass over, whilst the Enemy stood on the the opposite side; this was a Difficulty which one should have thought would fill them with great Uneasiness and set them a murmuring again; especially as their Strength and Spirits were now well nigh exhausted by forty years travelling; a less matter than this had oftentimes done it before. Nay, when they met with the like difficulty

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difficulty at the red Sea, when they were but just entered on their Journey, they were very distrustful and tumultuous. But what is very remarkable, we read nothing of their murmuring now; nor do they seem at all disheartened at the difficulty. Either because it was the last they should go through, or they remembered the Miracle wrought at the red Sea, and confidently expected the same again; or being inured to hardships so long in the Wilderness, (all the murmuring Generation being cut off) and being carried through so many dangers and difficulties by the immediate and miraculous hand of God, they were come to a better temper, and a fuller Reliance on God in this their time of need. Nor was their Hope or Expectation deceived: for as by a Miracle they were let out of *Egypt* into the Wilderness by the parting of the red Sea, so by the same Miracle were they let out of the Wilderness into *Canaan* by the parting of *Jordan*, (*k*). And then they entered into, and took possession of the long expected Land of *Canaan*.

Now

(*k*) See a particular Account of this matter. Josh. iii.

Now to apply this part of the History to the Christian's Life and Pilgrimage. The last Enemy he is to overcome his Death. And as it is the last, so to some Christians it is the most terrible of all their Trials; And what all their Faith and Hope and Patience is little enough to support them under. But there is no arriving at the heavenly *Canaan* without first passing through this fatal *Jordan*. And as the *Israelites* by the long and frequent Exercise of their Faith, and Hope, and Trust in God, were better prepared for this last difficulty of passing over *Jordan*; so the more these Graces are wrought into a lively Habit, the more composed will the Soul be under the Apprehensions of approaching Death. The Christian has recourse to his past Experience of the Power, the Grace, and Goodness of God; remembers what he hath often done for him, and in dependence on that Promise, *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*, commits his Soul to God, as *into the hands of a faithful Creator*; ventures on the dark passage without dismay, and soon arrives at the Land of everlasting Light.

Thus

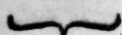
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Thus have I gone through the first Observation I made upon the Words, and in several Instances shewn how fitly the Passage of the *Israelites* through the Wilderness to *Canaan* represents the Christian's Pilgrimage through this World to Heaven. The other Observation was this — “That
“whilst we are in this Pilgrimage-State it
“is our Duty often to recollect, remember
“and seriously consider the ways of God
“and the Dispensations of his Providence
“towards us, and especially those that have
“been very extraordinary and remarkable.” This is the Exhortation in the Text, immediately directed to the *Israelites* whilst they were in the Wilderness; and the Similitude of our Circumstances to theirs must convince us that the Duty here enjoined does no less concern us than it did them. — This will be the Subject of the next Discourse. I shall now conclude this with a few reflexions. And,

1. Let these Thoughts then be improved to abate our desires after the pleasures of the present Life, and excite them after those of a better. What has a Pilgrim's Life in it
that

that is so desirable? What is there in a Wilderness, that we should be so much in love with it? Or in the Labours, Hardships, and Perils of it, that we should be so loth to part with them? Are all the Pleasures which the greatest Sensualist ever enjoyed, sufficient to counterbalance the Pains and Perplexities with which they are purchased?—Nay, those very pleasures are often painful; and such as a Person of a better and more refined taste can never relish, hardly endure. None are very fond of these things, but those who have never tasted better. Had we ever known the Joys of Heaven, we should give those of Earth another name, and should need the greatest patience to remain tolerably contented with them. The highest Delights of sense would be so far from captivating our Heart, that we should disrelish them; as one, who had tasted the Elegance of a Royal Table, would overlook the Poverty of a Cottage.

But though we have never tasted better pleasures than those of Earth, which are too gross and dreggy to suit a Soul whose taste

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is refined, yet are we not capable of better? Do we not find something within us that craves after higher Enjoyments? Something that never was, and never can be satisfied with mere earthly Bliss in all it's highest Improvements? And should not this convince us, that there are much better things for us in reserve if we belong to GOD; and excite our most ardent Desires after them?

Let us make but a true Estimate of this world, and we shall soon see that there is nothing in it that is very engaging, and that our Situation here is but like a restless wandering in a dry, inhospitable Desert; where we have nothing to do but to make the best of our way through it, so as to arrive safely at the Land of everlasting Rest.

2. What reason have we to be thankful, that we have so sure a Guide through this dangerous Desert! The *Israelites* themselves had not one more safe. For the Word of GOD is to us what the cloudy Pillar was to them. We have not indeed the attending Miracles which they had; nor do we need them. For I am fully satisfied, that those

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Prejudices that can stand against all the Light and Evidence of the Christian Revelation, would bar the heart against all Conviction from Miracles. And as a plain, perfect, standing Revelation, was given to us instead of all Miracles, and as this complete Revelation renders our Dispensation preferable to all those that went before it, it follows, that in point of Evidence and Conviction it is superior to all Miracles, and more adapted to work upon rational Minds, even in the Judgment of GOD himself, who gave it us. Otherwise the former Dispensations of Miracles would herein have the Advantage of ours. But there were Infidels under those Dispensations as well as under this. So true is it, that he that believeth not *Moses and the Prophets, Christ and his Apostles, would not believe, the greatest of all Miracles, one rising from the Dead.* Let us be sure to keep close to the word of GOD, our only safe Guide through all the dangerous and devious Ways of this wild and barren Desert.

3. Though our State and Condition in this World be much the same as that of

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the *Israelites* was in the Wilderness, let us however take care that our Temper and Disposition be not the same. *Let us not murmur as they murmured*; nor repine or fret at every adverse Occurrence or Difficulty we may meet with, as they did. And especially, let us beware of that Unbelief, for which they fell short of the promised Land. The same Unbelief that excluded them from *Canaan*, will exclude us from Heaven. They are set up as our Warning, not as our Pattern. See this Caution given us in particular by the Apostle, *Heb. iii. 8. and following, Harden not your Hearts as in the Provocation, in the day of Temptation in the Wilderness: When your Fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my Works forty Years. Wherefore I was grieved with that Generation, and said, they do alway err in their Hearts, and they have not known my ways. So I sware in my Wrath, they shall not enter into my rest. Take heed, Brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living God.*

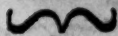
Lastly,

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XII.

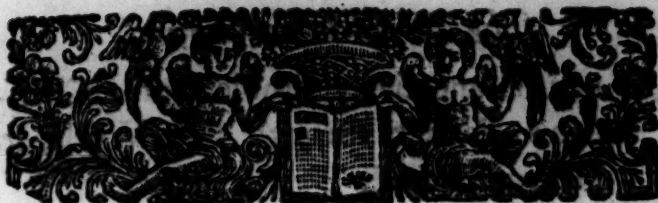


Lastly, Whilst we are in this Wilderness, let us keep the heavenly *Canaan* always in our Eye. Let us not forget whither we are tending; the happy Land for which we are bound. The frequent Thoughts of it will speed our progress towards it, quicken our preparations for it, and be a sovereign Support under all the Trials we may meet with in our way to it; will soften our Sorrows, and reconcile us to all our earthly Disappointments. And indeed, what is there which a Man need call a Disappointment whose Heaven is secure?

We may, for ought we know, be just on the Borders of that happy Land. And let not the *Jordan* that parts it from us discourage us. Our great Redeemer, by passing over it before us, hath assuaged its swelling Floods; and hath made a safe and easy Passage through it for them that follow him, and walk in his Steps. Let but our Faith and Hope, and Patience, hold out a little longer; and our heavenly *Joshua*, the Captain of our Salvation, will safely conduct us to our everlast-

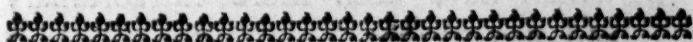
SERM. *ing Rest; who hath promised, that where*
XII. *he is, there shall his Servants be, to behold*
his Glory; to live and reign with him in
Heaven at his Father's right Hand, where
there is fulness of Joy, and Pleasures for
evermore.





S E R M O N XIII.

The W A Y to improve past P R O -
V I D E N C E S.



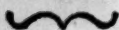
D E U T. viii. 2.

*And thou shalt remember all the
Way which the Lord thy GOD
led thee these forty Years in the
Wilderness, to humble thee, and
to prove thee, to know what was
in thine Heart, whether thou
wouldest keep his Commandments
or no.*



FROM these words I made two
Observations, viz.

I. That the wandering of the *Israelites*
through the Wilderness to *Canaan*, is a



The Way to improve

natural and lively Emblem of a Christian's Passage through this World to Heaven. And,

- II. That whilst we are in this state of Pilgrimage, it is our Duty often to recollect, and seriously consider the ways of God, and the various Dispensations of his Providence towards us, especially those which have been more extraordinary and remarkable.

The former of these Observations I have already handled; and proceed now to the immediate Consideration of the latter. In treating of which I propose,

- I. To specify some of those providential Dispensations which we ought in a more especial manner to recollect and consider.
- II. To shew how they are to be remembered. And,
- III. What are those Considerations that should principally induce us hereunto.

- I. I am to specify some of those providential Dispensations which we ought in a more

more especial manner to recollect and consider.

And this Review ought to be universal. We should not willingly let pass any of the ways and dispensations of Providence towards us without a serious Remark. But as we cannot remember them all, we should take the more Care to retain the Impression of those that are more remarkable, as a testimony of our dutiful Acknowledgment of GOD, and our Dependence upon him in all our ways. For thus to think upon, and improve the ways of Providence, is a sign of a serious and devout Mind; as on the contrary, it is mentioned as a mark of a very stupid and ungrateful People, that *they regard not the Work of the Lord, nor consider the Operation of his Hands* (a).

All the most extraordinary Providences of GOD then, whether afflictive or merciful, temporal or spiritual, personal or family, private or publick, late, or long since past, are to be faithfully treasured up in our memory, and at certain times seriously reflected upon, for the confirmation of our Hope and Faith, and Trust in GOD. This is the Duty

(a) Isai. v. 12.

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Duty commanded the *Israelites* in the Text, and is of no less concern to us, whose state in this World is so much like what theirs was in the Wilderness.

I. Then we should often call to mind GOD's afflicting and humbling Providences. Have we been afflicted in our Bodies; let us remember how it was with us in our low Estate; what thoughts we then had of our Souls and another World; what serious Impressions were made upon our minds, which we should endeavour to renew and retain. Let us consider with ourselves, what *fruits of Righteousness* those Afflictions have wrought out for us; in what Instance or Degree they have been sanctified; how far the good Ends of them have been answered: For the greatest Affliction of all is to lose the Benefit of our Afflictions; to come out of the Furnace of Affliction unhumbled, unmortified, unrefined; which may justly provoke GOD to throw us into the same again, and to make it still *seven times hotter*.

Again, have we been afflicted in our Spirits? By sore Temptations, grievous Dejections, severe Conflicts with Sin and Satan, little Hopes, great Fears, dreadful Doubts,
and

and terrifying Apprehensions concerning the state of our Souls, and what is like to become of them hereafter. These kind of troubles ought by no means to be forgotten. And when they are remembered, our proper Enquiry is, How we got rid of them? For there is a very wrong and dangerous way of getting rid of such spiritual Concern of Mind. If Stupidity and Indolence, Neglect or Worldly-mindedness, carnal Security, or prevailing Vanity, have contributed to over-bear and drown those Convictions, and banish that serious Thoughtfulness and religious Sorrow we once had, our State is really worse than it was then; and we have more reason now to be concerned than we had before. But if it hath made us more humble and watchful, more observant of God and our Duty, in every Branch of it, more dependent on his Grace to strengthen us against Sin; and if in this way the Comforts of Religion, Peace of Conscience, the Joys of the Holy Ghost, and the Hopes of our Sincerity, have been recovered and established; then, to be sure, such Providences of God ought never to be forgotten, but to be always remembered with the most grate-

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grateful Disposition of Soul to the honour of his Grace.

Again, have we been afflicted in our Family or Friends, by the Death of some, or the Sickness and Distress of others, (and O, how deeply does the Heart sometimes feel the force of reflected Sorrows!) let us not soon forget these kind of Afflictions when they are past. It is possible we may know very well from what immediate Cause they flowed, yet let us not overlook the sovereign Hand of GOD therein. And if they have in any degree been owing to some neglect or fault in us, they should especially be remembered, to humble us, and make us more wise and cautious for the future.

Or have we been involved in a more general Calamity, and suffered with the Publick; whatever others do let us take care not to forget the Hand of GOD in his judicial Visitations. For as their Sufferings were no Abatement to ours, so their forgetfulness of them should be no Example to us.

Or have our Afflictions been long since past? why still they ought not to be forgotten. But by a serious Recollection we should

should endeavour to revive the good Impressions they once made, that they may increase our Caution and Gratitude so long as we live.

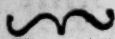
2. We should likewise remember the merciful Providences of GOD towards us. Which, it is to be feared, we are as apt to forget as his afflicting Dispensations.

For Instance, our temporal mercies should be frequently remembered. The Health, the Peace, the Prosperity, and the worldly Advantages we enjoy above so many others; which the Distresses of the many poor Objects we meet with should bring to our minds; especially any signal or distinguishing Mercy past, which laid the Foundation of most of our present Comforts; or any eminent Deliverance from past Dangers or Evils, which might have made all the future part of Life unhappy.

Again, our spiritual Mercies and religious Advantages should be thankfully recorded by us; and especially that invaluable one of a good and pious Education: That we were not born among Heathens, or trained up among the most profligate and ignorant sort of Christians; but were early instruct-

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instructed in the Knowledge of God and our Duty; and have enjoyed those valuable Advantages for securing our future Happiness which by far the greatest part of Mankind; nay, even of Christians, never had. And if, by the Grace of God, these Advantages have been improved to the effectual Conversion of our Hearts to God, so that we have a well-grounded Hope of our Interest in Christ, and the Acceptance of our Maker, this, the greatest of all Mercies, ought never to be forgotten by us.

Again, Family-mercies should be often remembered by us; Family-health, Peace and Prosperity; the Comfort of Relations, the Blessing of Children; especially if they *be found walking in the way of Truth*. And so should publick Mercies: Especially the signal Interpositions of Providence in preserving us from our Enemies, and restoring to us the Blessings of national Prosperity and Peace.

And the Blessings we have long enjoyed should no more be forgotten by us than those we have lately received. But upon recollecting the variety and suitableness of them we should take up the Psalmist's pious

past Providences.

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ous Resolution, *Long as I live I will praise the Lord, I will sing Praises to my GOD whilst I have a Being* (b). SERM.
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Thus should we remember all the way the Lord our GOD hath led us so many Years in this Wilderness; his afflicting and merciful Providences, both temporal and spiritual, private and publick, and even those which are long since past. The pious Jews had a way of preserving the Memory of any signal Providences, whether prosperous or afflictive, by giving such names to certain Places, or to their Children, as were significative of those providential Events which they desired never to forget. Thus significant were the names of all the twelve Patriarchs. And most of the proper Names in the Old Testament have some such religious Reference. Which shews the devout regard they had to the Duty recommended in the Text; and how mindful they were of the ways of GOD, of which they thus endeavoured to perpetuate the Memorial. And so far they are fit to be our Patterns, who are equally obliged to the same Duty now. But,

II. Let

(b) Psal. civ. 33.

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II. Let us now consider in what manner the past Providences of GOD are to be recollected and considered by us. And,

1. We should review them very intently and seriously; call to mind as many particulars as we can, reflect upon them, dwell upon the Reflection, till the Heart be deeply impressed with it.

“ Such a Providence, says the pious Soul,
 “ I desire never to forget. O, how did that
 “ threatening Affliction mollify and melt
 “ me! How serious were my Thoughts!
 “ How sincere my Prayers! How penitent
 “ my Heart! How fervent my Devotions!
 “ What low thoughts had I then of this
 “ World, and what awful views of Eternity!
 “ How anxiously did I then cast about in
 “ my mind, for some sure Evidence of
 “ my Sincerity, and my interest in the di-
 “ vine Favour, without which nothing then
 “ could give me peace! What Vows did
 “ my Soul then make, that if it should
 “ please GOD to spare me once more, my
 “ Life should be wholly devoted to him!
 “ He hath taken me at my Word, and
 “ once more given me a Reprieve. Forbid
 “ it,

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“ it, O my GOD, that I should ever forget
“ what thou hast done for me, or I have
“ promised to thee.”——“ At such a time,
“ may another say, I lost the greatest Com-
“ fort of my Life; a dear and valuable
“ Friend, whom I loved as my own Soul!
“ how severe that Stroke was, GOD knows.
“ I then said, *Lord, how frail is Man! be*
“ *thou alone my Trust.* And shall I soon for-
“ get what I then so readily acknowledged
“ and so deeply felt! The Remembrance of
“ it indeed is like tearing open a Wound that
“ is just healed, and makes the Heart to
“ bleed afresh. But if by such a Remem-
“ brance the same serious Impressions and
“ holy Purposes are again formed in my
“ mind, as were at that time, this renewed
“ Advantage will more than compensate the
“ renewal of that Pain; and make what is
“ my Duty turn to my Benefit and Com-
“ fort.”——And this indeed is the chief Ad-
vantage that arises from such a Recollection of
Providences long since past; it serves to revive
good Thoughts and Purposes in the mind,
and so promote an habitual seriousness of
Temper.

The Way to improve

2. We should review past Providences with thankfulness. We are commanded to *give thanks always and for all things*, Ephes. v. 20. What, are we to give thanks for Afflictions, Pains and Crosses? For those grievous and humbling Providences under which we weep and mourn? Yes, there is no Providence though ever so adverse, in which a Christian may not see much of the divine Goodness, and for which, upon the whole, he will not see abundant cause to be thankful. He hath reason to be thankful that his Afflictions are not greater; that when some of his Comforts are gone, he hath so many others left; that some Honey is thrown into his bitter Cup; that there is such a mixture of Mercy with Judgment; that his Supports are so seasonable and effectual; that under these Strokes he can eye the Father's Hand, and look upon them as the Effect of his Love, for *he chasteneth every Son he loves* (c). And if by such Afflictions some great and good Ends have been actually produced; if we are become more watchful, serious and devout, more mortified to the World, more thoughtful of

(c) Heb. xii. 6, 7.

past Providences.

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of Futurity, more humble in our Hearts, more diligent in our Duty, and more sensible of our dependence on GOD; If, I say, our Afflictions have wrought out for us these peaceable Fruits of Righteousness, though they were grievous once they are joyous now; are to be numbered amongst our most valuable Mercies, and ever remembered with the greatest thankfulness.

But especially are kind favourable Providences to be gratefully recorded. And if we turn our Thoughts back, and remember all the way the Lord our GOD hath led us in this Wilderness, it is not to be supposed but that every one of us may call to mind many a merciful Providence which have contributed greatly to the Comfort of our Lives, and laid the Foundation of our present Happiness and future Hopes. Some of these are common to us all. Such as the Benefit of a religious Education, the light of the Gospel, the opportunities of stated Worship, good Instructions, good Examples, and the like. O how many great and extensive Evils have these common mercies prevented! and what woful and lasting Misery have many poor wretches run into for the want of them!

Y 2

And

And more especially should our Thoughts dwell upon great and extraordinary Mercies; and if we reflect at the same time, that GOD, the sovereign Disposer of things, hath bestowed those Blessings upon us which he hath denied to others, we must be stupid Creatures indeed if we do not find our Hearts strongly disposed to Thankfulness.—

“How kind a Providence was it, may one
 “say, that delivered me from such and
 “such a Danger; which this time, or that
 “person or place now brings to my mind!
 “The Distemper prevailed above the force
 “of Medicine, defied the Physicians skill,
 “and my case appeared hopeless. I had
 “the Sentence of Death within myself, and
 “that Sentence confirmed by the weeping
 “Eyes, and sorrowful Looks of all my
 “Friends around me, but GOD was pleas-
 “ed to repeal it! *He sent his word and*
 “*healed me!* O, may I never forget that
 “Mercy as long as I live!” — “I this
 “Day reflect with thankfulness, may ano-
 “ther say, upon such a merciful and kind
 “Providence that smiled upon my worldly
 “Affairs, crowned my temporal views with
 “Success, and brought my Concerns to so
 “happy

past Providences.

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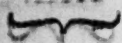
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“happy an Issue. The Hand of GOD directed that Affair; and may I never forget what I owe it.”——“Blessed be GOD, says another, that brought my Soul out of Darkneſs, and cheared it with the Light of his Countenance; who diſperſed my diſmal Doubts, and cauſed his Goſpel to ſhine into my Soul with Evidence and Comfort: that now, inſtead of dreadful Suſpence and anxious Fears, I have good *Hope through Grace* that I am ſincere, and accepted through the atoning Merits of the Redeemer, though my unwilling Frailties, which I continually mourn over and ſtrive againſt, are many.”——Thus ſhould the paſt Providences of GOD be remembered with *Thankfulneſs*.

3. Our Remembrance of the paſt Providences of GOD ſhould be improved for the Confirmation of our Hope and Truſt in him. And this is one principal Advantage that reſults from the Duty I am now recommending. By what GOD hath done for us we ſee what he is able to do. Our Experience then ſhould ſupport our Hope; and paſt mercies eſtabliſh our Truſt in GOD for future. It was thus the Apoſtle *Paul*

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improved them. *We would not, Brethren,* (says he) *have you ignorant of our Trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of Measure, above Strength, inso-much that we despaired even of Life. But we had the Sentence of Death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in GOD that raised the Dead. Who delivered us from so great a Death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us (d).* It was thus also that David argued; thy Servant (saith he to Saul) *slew both the Lion and the Bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, seeing he hath defied the Armies of the living GOD. David said, moreover, the LORD that delivered me out of the Paw of the Lion, and out of the Paw of the Bear, he WILL deliver me out of the Hand of this Philistine (e).* So may the pious Christian say, on a review of some Providences past; “By the Grace of GOD I was supported—
 “under such an Affliction, and carried
 “through such a Trial; and I hope he
 “will still proportion my Strength to my
 “Burden, and that whatever Evil befalls
 “me,

(d) 2 Cor. i. 8—10.

(e) 1 Sam. xvii. 36, 37.

"me, *his Grace will be sufficient for me.* SERM.
"My faithful GOD hath not yet suffered me XIII.
"to be tempted above what I am able, and I
"hope he will for the future *make way for*
"my *Escape (f).*"

The same Improvement should we make of our Reflexions upon GOD's merciful Dealings towards us.—"The great things which GOD hath already done for me, I hope are Pledges of good things to come. If I have improved them to his Glory, I have reason to hope they are so. For the best Assurance I can have that my mercies will be continued is, that they are sanctified."

Lastly, When we call to mind the past ways of GOD towards us, we should seriously reconsider in what manner we behaved under them, and what good we have gained from them. Every Providence hath a Voice: some a very loud one (if the Ear of Reason be but open) calling us in a more especial manner to practise some particular Duty, or forsake some particular Sin. Have we attended to the Voice of Providence, and fallen in with the Design of

Y 4

it?

SERM. it? Have merciful Providences made us more
 XIII. active, diligent and stedfast in the Service of
 GOD? and together with greater Power given
 us a better Heart to do good? Does an accession of Wealth increase our Usefulness; and with more frequent Opportunities have we a more ready Disposition to *serve the Will of GOD in our Generation?* If so, they have been double Mercies, and we ought to be doubly thankful. If not, we have a great deal more to answer for than we had before, and how it fared with that Servant who *neglected his Talent*, deserves our most serious Consideration.

Again, what effect have providential Afflictions had upon us? and all Afflictions are to be deemed such, excepting those that are the genuine effects of our own Sin and Folly. Have they humbled us? mortified our Worldly-mindedness? checked our false Ambition? or subdued any secret Lust that before too much prevailed? Have they fixed our Hope and Dependence on GOD? and made us think more seriously of Death and another World? And, in a word, been the means of making us more circumspect and better Christians? Then, "Blessed be
 "GOD,

“GOD, may we say, that ever those Afflictions beset us. Now I see, what before I could not, that they were all the Effects of his Love and gracious Intentions towards me.”——But on the other hand; “Am I the same vain, carnal, stupid, worldly Creature I ever was? Have I the same unsubdued Corruptions and sinful Habits in their full force? and, notwithstanding the good Impressions I then felt, and the good Purposes I then formed, am I returned as a Dog to his Vomit, and as a Sow that was washed to her wallowing in the Mire? This incorrigible Temper is aggravated Guilt: And if I have not been yet sensible of it, it is high time I were, lest I provoke God, at length, to give me over as reprobate and irreclaimable.”

In this manner then are we to reflect on the past Ways of GOD towards us. And having thus considered the Duty enjoined in the Text, and how it ought to be performed, I am now,

III. To lay before you some of those Considerations that are most proper to induce us hereunto. And,

I. The

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I. The exprefs Command of GOD should be a fovereign Motive to this Duty. We cannot think the Command in the Text is to be restrained to the *Jewish* People, to whom it was primarily and immediately directed. That which comes recommended to us, not only on the divine Authority of Scripture, but from the Fitness and Importance of the thing itself (as this does) must be of equal Concern to all. Not to say, that we have the same Duty implicitly contained in many other Scripture Precepts. It is necessarily implied in the Command we have to *remember* GOD, and to *acknowledge him in all our ways*. For how can we be said to *remember* GOD, if we forget his Providences, and the most remarkable Dispensations thereof towards us? or *acknowledge him in all our ways*, when we neglect to acknowledge him in his own?

This Duty was deemed of so great Importance among the *Jews*, that they not only gave memorial Names to Places and Persons, to perpetuate the Memory of any particular Mercies they had received, but their three great Annual Festivals were instituted for the same purpose; as a solemn Commemoration

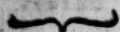
memoration of three extraordinary Dispensations of God's Providence to that People. Thus their Feast of *Passover* was intended to keep up the Remembrance of their wonderful Deliverance out of *Egypt*: their Feast of *Pentecost* was in memory of the promulgation of their Law from mount *Sinai*; which was fifty days after their Deliverance from *Egypt*: and their Feast of *Tabernacles* was instituted in Commemoration of their dwelling forty Years in Booths and Tabernacles, during their Travels through the Wilderness to *Canaan*.

2. The Duty recommended in the Text is necessary, as subservient to the great End for which such Providences are intended; viz. *To do us good in the latter End*. So that if we seldom or superficially reflect upon them, we frustrate the chief Design of them, and lose the Benefit and Advantage intended thereby.

3. This is a very pleasant as well as useful Employment of the Mind: and a very happy way of filling up those leisure Minutes, which through the Vagrancy and Dissipation of Thought do so frequently run
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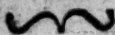
to waste. To sit down and engage our Thoughts to take a serious Review of all the most memorable Events and Turns that have befallen us in Life, through the several Stages of Infancy, Youth, Manhood, and Age, to recollect our disposition and deportment under them, and then to set up our *Ebenexer*, saying, "*Hitherto the Lord hath helped me*;" "through all those varying Scenes of Life" "my Father's Hand hath safely conducted me;" this, I say, will afford us a much more sensible and solid Entertainment than the common Amusements of Thought, or the Remembrance of those light, low, fantastick Pleasures, which served only to fill the Mind with Froth and Vanity.

4. Such a serious Reflexion on past Providences may be of use to direct us in our future Conduct. For let us consider with ourselves thus, "Amidst all the Tumult" "and Concern of Mind I felt under such" "an afflicting Event, what were the" "Thoughts that gave me most Relief" "and Comfort? What part of my past" "Conduct did I think upon with the greatest Satisfaction? What duties gave me the" "greatest

“greatest Pleasure in the Review? In those
“Actions and Duties then may I be still
“more diligent, as I desire to lay up a Stock
“of Peace and Comfort against the time I
“shall stand in the same need of it.” For
every intelligent Christian knows there is a
wide difference between the Satisfaction of
mind that naturally arises from a conscious
sense of Fidelity in Duty, and that false hope
that flows from a Dependence thereupon as
the matter of our Justification.—On the
other hand, “What Sins lay then with the
“greatest Weight upon my Conscience?
“O, let me especially beware of those Sins
“whatever they be, as I would not feel the
“dreadful Sting of them under the future
“Apprehensions of Death.” We generally
have the truest Sentiments of things under
the Awakenings of some grievous Affliction:
and therefore the Judgment we then form of
ourselves, our State and Life, should regulate
our After-conduct.

More particularly, such Reflexions on
past Providences, and on our Behaviour un-
der them, will be a great Help to us to
behave aright under future Providences of
the

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the like nature. For instance, do we remember we have been fretful, impatient, and unsubmitive, under former Corrections, let that be our Burden now; and let us learn to bear our Father's chastening Hand with better Temper. Were we contented, meek, resigned, and humble; we know then by Experience, that this is the best way to bear Afflictions; and therefore should endeavour to cultivate such a Spirit with the greater care to make our future Burdens lighter.—
In like manner, have we been unmindful of former Mercies? Let us shew our Repentance by being more thankful for those we now enjoy. And let our Thankfulness be increased with our increasing Comforts.

Lastly, The shortness and uncertainty of Life makes this Duty more especially necessary. What is past we know, what is to come we know not. For any thing that we know, by far the most important Periods and Occurrences of Life may be past with us. If the Hand of Providence therein hath not yet been properly attended to, and improved by us, it is high time it were. Which can only be done by this fe-
rious

past Providences.

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rious retrospective view of the Ways of GOD towards us which hath now been recommended. Time past, indeed, cannot be recalled, but Providences past may still be improved. Which is the only way we have of living our Lives over again (g): and should therefore be more especially attended to by those of us who have but a little time more to live.

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To conclude, let us all then take the Counsel given us in the Text; and remember *all the Way the Lord our GOD hath led us these forty, fifty, sixty Years and upwards (may some of us say) in the Wilderness of this World, to humble us, to try us, and prove us, and see whether we will keep his Commandments or no.* The great Design of GOD in all his various Dispensations towards us, was the same he had in leading the *Israelites* through the *Wilderness*; *to do us good in the latter End.* Let us not be wanting then to concur with this his gracious Design towards us: But by a careful Improvement of his past, present, and future,

(g) ————— Hoc est
Vivere bis, vitâ posse priore frui.

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future Providences, may we learn a more intimate dependence upon him, that we may have peace and hope in our latter End; and under the Conduct of his Grace be finally led to the everlasting Enjoyment of him, through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom be Glory for ever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter: 1: 18. That the Dept of yr understanding being enlightened it may know what the hope of yr calling is. It is the desire of the glory of the inheritance amongst The END of the SECOND VOLUME.

The sum of the Right. this is the substance in part of it in regard to a secret expectation of the promise for the sake of the important thing in prayer is that they may be enlightened by the Spirit of God to know the object of their hope the riches of the glory of the inheritance in light & then of this their hope God has reserved for the consummation of this world. Lastly that it might be clear to you by divine illumination I shall only treat of the foundation of hope & as St. Paul says so



ERRATA. we wished for you
I hope you will for yr selves - I shall endeavour
by the

PAGE 8. line 5. for constant read content. p. 9. l. 14. after Error put a Colon. p. 146. l. 17. f. of r. or. p. 171. l. 20. after be add the p. 190. l. 1. f. must r. just. p. 214. l. 7. dele we. assistance to assist you in endeavouring to discern yr true state. for yr selves & any I should ask you are a son of yr hope in Christ you may give it - we much rejoice. I have stood well in such trials to undeceive a false hope as I am fearful some y^entertain & to establish a good for encouragement & consolation.

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